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## EDITORIAL PREFACE

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

No section of the population of India can afford to neglect her ancient heritage. In her literature, philosophy, art, and regulated life there is much that is worthless, much also that is distinctly unhealthy ; yet the treasures of knowledge, wisdom, and beauty which they contain are too precious to be lost. Every citizen of India needs to use them, if he is to be a cultured modern Indian. This is as true of the Christian, the Muslim, the Zoroastrian as of the Hindu. But, while the heritage of India has been largely explored by scholars, and the results of their toil are laid out for us in their books, they cannot be said to be really available for the ordinary man. The volumes are in most cases expensive, and are often technical and difficult. Hence this series of cheap books has been planned by a group of Christian men, in order that every educated Indian, whether rich or poor, may be able to find his way into the treasures of India's past. Many Europeans, both in India and elsewhere, will doubtless be glad to use the series.

The utmost care is being taken by the General Editors in selecting writers, and in passing manuscripts for the press. To every book two tests are rigidly applied : everything must be scholarly, and everything must be sympathetic. The purpose is to bring the best out of the ancient treasures, so that it may be known, enjoyed, and used.







RUPAMATI AND BAZ BAHADUR.  
From the Original Painting in the Art Section of  
The Indian Museum, Calcutta.

THE HERITAGE OF INDIA

POEMS BY INDIAN  
WOMEN

Selected and Rendered by Various Translators

AND EDITED BY

MARGARET MACNICOL, L.R.C.P. & S.E.,  
POONA.

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## PREFACE

IN this book an attempt has been made to bring together some specimens of the work of Indian Poetesses, women who sang or wrote in many different ages and under very varying circumstances. The field is a very wide one, and no claim is made that a fully representative selection of the work done is given here. It has proved impossible to include poems from all of even the leading vernaculars, not always because such poems do not exist, but sometimes because of the difficulty of obtaining access to them, and sometimes because of the difficulty of having them suitably translated. Serious omissions may, for similar reasons, have occurred even in those vernaculars that are represented.

The book is the work of many authoresses and of many translators. The ideal in view was that the translations as well as the poems should be the work of women. This, however, has not proved practicable in all cases. One person, or more than one—sometimes Indian, sometimes European—was responsible for each vernacular. He or she obtained such other help as seemed advisable, and sent in a selection of such translations as were deemed suitable. If these were too numerous to be all included, a further selection was made. In a few cases the selections are from translations already published in English.

The material obtainable in different vernaculars varied considerably in its poetic value. While some



contained profound thought or beautiful expression, other poems were of a much more commonplace order. Consequently the translations are necessarily somewhat uneven in quality. All have, however, the interest of showing with what the hearts and minds of India's women have been occupied during many stages of her long history.

The separate introduction to each vernacular has been compiled, either wholly or partially, from material sent by the translators.

The Editors of the Series join with me in expressing grateful thanks to the following writers for leave granted to print in this volume original poems or translations published by them :

Mrs. Rhys Davids, nine selections from *Psalms of the Sisters* ; Sir George Grierson and Dr. L. D. Barnett, translations of poems by Lal Ded from *Lalla Vakyani* ; Mrs. Sarojinī Naidu, three poems from *The Golden Threshold* ; Miss Ellen Goreh, one selection from *Poems*.

We are also grateful to the following publishers for arranging to allow us to print poems published by them :

Mr. William Heinemann, three poems from Mrs. Naidu's *Golden Threshold* ; Messrs. Trübner & Co., two poems from Toru Dutt's *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindusthan* ; The Royal Asiatic Society, poems by Lal Ded from *Lalla Vakyani*.

Our thanks are also due to Mr. J. C. Dutt, of Ram Bagan, Calcutta, the living representative of Toru Dutt and Aru Dutt, for leave to reproduce Toru Dutt's poems already mentioned, and Aru Dutt's "Still Barred Thy Door." The latter poem first appeared in *A Sheaf Gleaned from French Fields*, published in Calcutta in 1876.

The volume contains one hundred and ten selections, written by fifty-six women, in fourteen distinct languages. Almost every part of India is represented by those writers, and all the important religions except Jainism and Zoroastrianism. Twenty-five translators have done their very best to make the volume successful. The tables which follow this Preface are intended to place vividly before the reader the main facts about the writers and their poems.

As the idea of this little volume originated with Dr. Farquhar, so it is due to his unsparing efforts that it ever took shape. He discovered suitable people to undertake the various sections of the book, enlisted their interest and help, and in every way furthered the materialisation of that promised help. To my husband, too, I am greatly indebted for much assistance of many kinds.

MARGARET MACNICOL.



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## The Poetesses, in Chronological Order, with the Language in which each wrote

C. 1000 B.C.	Ghoshā	.. Vedic Sanskrit
Vth Cent. B.C.	Vāsitthī	.. Pali
	Ubbirī	.. Pali
	Sumanā	.. Pali
	Patāchārā	.. Pali
	Sāmā	.. Pali
	Saṅghā	.. Pali
	Muttā	.. Pali
A.D.	Sumaṅgala's Mother	.. Pali
	Mettikā	.. Pali
XIIth Cent.	Avvai (date unknown)	.. Tamil
	Āṇḍāl (date unknown)	.. Tamil
	Mahādeviakkā	.. Kanarese
XIIIth Cent.	Sultan Raziyyā Begam	.. Persian
	Muktā Bāi	.. Marāṭhī
XIVth Cent.	Chokhā's wife	.. Marāṭhī
	Gaṅgādevī	.. Classical Sanskrit
	Śilā (date unknown)	.. Classical Sanskrit
	Vikaṭānitambā (date unknown)	.. Classical Sanskrit
	Lal Ded	.. Kāshmirī
XVth Cent.	Janā Bāi	.. Marāṭhī
	Rāmī	.. Bengali
	Mirā Bāi	.. Hindī and Gujarātī
XVIth Cent.	Mādhavī	.. Bengali
	Rūpamatī	.. Hindī
XVIIth Cent.	Priyambadā	.. Classical Sanskrit
	Bahinā Bāi	.. Marāṭhī
	The Empress Nur Jahan	.. Persian
	Princess Zeb-un-Nissa	.. Persian
	Princess Zinat-un-Nissa	.. Persian
	Śruṅgarāmma	.. Kanarese
	Honnamma	.. Kanarese

XVIIIth Cent.	{	Shekh Rangrezin	.. Hindi
		Sahajo Bāi	.. Hindi
		Dayā Bāi	.. Hindi
		Gavrī Bāi	.. Gujarāṭi
		Ānandamayī	.. Bengali
		Shirin	.. Persian
		Nawwab Bahu Begam	.. Urdu
XIXth Cent.	{	Divāli Bāi	.. Gujarāṭi
		Kuṭṭikkuṇṇa Taṅkacchi	.. Malayālam
		Mānkumārī	.. Bengali
		Aru Dutt	.. English
		Toru Dutt	.. English
		Paṅkajinī Basu	.. Bengali
		Bahu Begam	.. Urdu
XXth Cent.	{	Ellen Goreh	.. English
		Hemantabālā Dutt	.. Bengali
		Kāminī Roy	.. English
		Sarojinī Naidu	.. English
		Priyambadā Debī <sup>1</sup>	.. Bengali
		Śrī Saraswatī Devī	.. Hindi
		Sarojabālā (Dās Gupta) Sen	.. Bengali
		Nirupamā Debī <sup>1</sup>	.. Bengali
		Dharendrabālā Singh	.. Bengali
		Lakshmī Bāi Tilak	.. Marāṭhī

**The Languages, in Alphabetical Order, with the  
Poetesses who used them and the Poems  
published in this volume**

Bengali	{	Ānandamayī, LXXI.
		Dharendrabālā Singh, LXXXV.
		Hemantabālā Dutt, CI.
		Kāminī Roy, XCI, CII, CIII.
		Mādhavī, <sup>1</sup> LVIII.
		Mānkumārī, XC.
		Nirupamā Debī, <sup>1</sup> LXXXVI, LXXXVIII, XCIII.
		Paṅkajinī Basu, LXXXVII, XCVIII.
		Priyambadā Debī, <sup>1</sup> XCII, XCIV, XCV.
		Rāmī, LXVIII.
		Sarojabālā (Dās Gupta) Sen, CVI, CIX.

<sup>1</sup> *Devī* and *Mādhavī* become *Debī* and *Mādhavī* in Bengali.

Classical Sanskrit	{ Gaṅgādevī, LXIV, LXXVII. Priyambadā, XLI. Śīlā, LXX. Vikaṭānītambā, LXXVIII.
English	{ Aru Dutt, CV. Ellen Goreh, CX. Sarojinī Naidu, LXXXIX, CVIII. Toru Dutt, XCIX, C, CIV.
Gujarātī	{ Divālī Bāi, XXXII. Gavri Bāi, XIV. Mīrā Bāi, XLIV, XLVII, XLIX.
Hindī	{ Dayā Bāi, XXXIII, XXXV. Mīrā Bāi, XLII, LI, LIII, LIV, LVI. Rūpamatī, LXXV. Sahajo Bāi, XXXIV, XXXVI, XXXVII. Shekh Raṅgrezin, LXXIII. Śrī Saraswatī Devī, XCVI.
Kanarese	{ Honnamma, LXV. Mahādeviakkā, LXIII. Śruṅṅara mma, LXVII.
Kāshmirī	{ Lal Ded, XII, XVIII, XX, XXII, XXIII, XXV, XXVII, XXVIII, XXXIX, LIX.
Mālayālam	Kuṭṭikkunṇa Taṅkacchi, LVII.
Marāṭhī	{ Bahinā Bāi, XL. Chokhā's Wife, XXI. Janā Bāi, XXIV, XXVI, XXIX, XXX. Muktā Bāi, XI, XIII, XV, XVI, XVII, XIX, XXXI, XXXVIII. Lakshmi Bāi Tilak, CVII.
Pali	{ Muttā, VIII. Mettikā, X. Paṭāchārā, VII. Sāmā, V. Saṅghā, VI. Sumanā, III. Sumanā's Mother, IX. Ubbiri, IV. Vāsithi, II.
Persian	{ Nur Jahan, LXXIV, LXXXI, LXXXIII. Sultan Raziyyā Begam, LXXII. Shirin, LXXXII. Zeb-un-Nissa, LXIX, LXXVI, LXXXIX. Zinat-un-Nissa, LXXXIV.



Tamil	{ Āndāl, XLIII, XLV, XLVI, XLVIII, L, LII, LV. Avvai, LX, LXI, LXII, LXVI.
Urdu	{ Nawwab Bahu Begam, LXXX. Bahu Begam, XCVII.
Vedic Sanskrit	Ghoshā, I.

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### The Languages, in Alphabetical Order, with the Translators and the Selections Translated

Bengali	{ Miss Whitehouse, Calcutta, LXXXV, LXXXVI, LXXXVII, LXXXVIII, XC, XCI, XCII, XCIII, XCIV, XCV, XCVIII, CI, CII, CIII. Edward J. Thompson, B.A., M.C., Oxford, CVI, CIX. J. N. C. Ganguly, M.A., Calcutta, LVIII, LXVIII, LXXI.
Classical Sanskrit	{ M. Krishnamachariar, M.A., M.L., Ph.D., Bapatla, Kistna District, LXIV, LXX, LXXVII, LXXVIII. J. N. C. Ganguly, M.A., Calcutta, XLI.
English	
Gujarātī	{ Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Ramanbhai M. Nilkanth, B.A., Ahmedabad, XIV, XXXII, XLIV, XLVII, XLIX.
Hindī	{ Mrs. F. E. Keay, Meerut, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII, LI, LIII, LIV, LVI, XCVI. Sir George Grierson, Camberley, XLII. Major-General Cunningham, LXXV.
Kanarese	{ Miss Butler and Mrs. Dasappa, B.A., Banga- lore, LXIII, LXV, LXVII.
Kāshmirī	{ Sir George Grierson, Camberley, and L. D. Barnett, D.Litt., London, XII, XVIII, XX, XXII, XXIII, XXV, XXVII, XXVIII, XXXIX, LIX.
Malayālam	T. K. Joseph, B.A., L.T., Trivandrum, LVII.
Marāṭhī	{ Mrs. Macnicol, Poona, and D. K. Laddu, XI, XIII, XV, XVI, XVII, XIX, XXI, XXIV, XXVI, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXVIII. Rev. B. K. and Mrs. Uzgaré, Bombay, CVII.

Pali	{ Mrs. Rhys Davids, London, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X.
Persian	{ Professor Barakat Ullah, Lahore, LXIX, LXXII, LXXIV, LXXIX, LXXXI, LXXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXIV. Mrs. Sarojinī Naidu, LXXVI.
Tamil	{ Miss Abraham and the Rev. J. S. Masilāmani, B.D., Madura, XLIII, XLV, XLVI, XLVIII, LII, LV, LXII, LXVI. The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Dornakal, LL.D. (Cantab.), LX, LXI.
Urdu	{ M. Hedayet Hosain, M.A., Ph.D., Shams-ul Ulama, Khan Bahadur, Calcutta, LXXX, XCVII.
• Vedic Sanskrit	H. D. Griswold, M.A., Ph.D., D.D., I.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

As we stand on the threshold of a new era in the long life of India, we need must ask ourselves many questions as to what new and strange developments it may bring. One such question, forced upon us by the trend of recent events, is, What part will India's women play in the new world to be? Even to guess at an answer we must consider what part they have played in the past and to what that past has moulded them in mind and soul. This little volume, it is hoped, may help in some measure to reveal the outlook of women at different stages of India's history, to show with what their minds were filled, what their deepest longings were, and what the chief concerns of their daily lives. It may simplify our task to divide the immemorial ages of India's history into certain roughly defined periods, characterised by certain movements or influences which quickened anew the spirit of poetry in the land.

1. In the dim antiquity when the R̥g Veda had its birth, women are said to have had a share in the creation of that great literature. From the perusal of some of the few poems attributed to them it appears that the boons invoked from the gods are mainly material. There is no hint in these poems of the bondage of birth and rebirth, no craving for release from it, such as is so prominent in the religious poems of later ages. Estrangement from a husband, the fear of living unmarried, the desire to be quit of a rival wife, such are the motives that produce from these poetesses their prayers and thanksgivings. Of the hymns that tradition attributes to women singers one only has been included in this collection. Ghoshā, who is believed to have been the author of this, as well as of another hymn in the

*Rig Veda*, was the daughter of a king named Kakshivān, who was also a *rishi*, i.e. "seer," or author of hymns. Indeed he is the eponymous *rishi* of one of nine groups of hymns which together form the second half (hymns 51-191) of the first book of the *Rig Veda*, his group being 116-126. Ghoshā is thus the earliest example of what has occurred very frequently in India since her days—the beloved daughter of a scholar trained as a scholar by her father. Compare Priyambadā and Kuṭṭikkuññu Tāṅkacchi below, pp. 24 and 26.

2. The centuries following the time when the hymns of the *Rigveda* were composed saw the early religion gradually developed by Brāhman priests into a vast sacrificial system, which is mirrored for us in the *Sāmaveda*, the *Yajurveda*, and the Brāhmaṇas. Then, probably in the seventh century B.C., there arose a spirit of dissatisfaction with external priestly rites, accompanied by an eager search by the awakened spirit for the truth about the universe, suffering, sin, and man's deepest religious needs. The first outcome of this period of inquiry was the doctrine of transmigration and karma; and shortly afterwards came the speculative movement which created the philosophy of the Ātman and the order of wandering ascetics who lived by it. From them came the great works which we know as the Upanishads. The ferment of the times soon produced many other ascetic teachers, each with his doctrine and his following of monks. Amongst these was the great spirit who was called the Buddha, i.e. the enlightened one, by his followers, and whose system is therefore known to-day as Buddhism. Like all the other philosophic schools of the times, the system of the Buddha sought Release from transmigration and karma, and prescribed an ascetic life as essential in the great quest.

In the large and varied literature produced by early Buddhism there is a good deal of noble poetry which gives expression to the highest aims and attainments of Buddhist seekers; and one of the collections is a series of poems, believed to be the work of nuns of the

earliest period, and called *Therī-gathā*. This work has been translated by Mrs. Rhys Davids, under the title *Psalms of the Sisters*; and, through her courtesy, we are able to reproduce nine of these striking utterances. Limits of space forbid anything like an adequate representation of this school of thought, but the poems chosen may help to illustrate certain general characteristics of these cries of the human heart. They are ascribed to women who had left the world, its cares, joys and restrictions, to become Buddhist nuns. What was the motive that inspired them? As we have said, a desire for Release predominates, but the bondage is not always the same. Some of the poetesses sound a strangely modern note—somewhat akin to the spirit of the present-day feminist—in their exultation over the opportunity for self-expression, the breaking loose from the cramping bonds of an irksome domestic routine, the joy of developing their separate personality. In this they differ greatly from later poetesses, with their longing to lose personality altogether. Perhaps we may say that the impression left by reading these Psalms is of a craving for complete mental poise, and of resentment against life's uncertainties and sorrows, because they have power to overthrow their calm. Like Wordsworth they

feel the weight of chance desires,  
And long for a repose that ever is the same.

When they win that repose, they exult. Its intellectual character strikes a Westerner. The calm that comes from a unifying of the inward nature, never to be broken or lost by fresh rebirths—this seems their goal. Release from cramping circumstances, from overmuch sorrow, from the impermanence of things, such are the motives that drove out these old nuns: but of release from sin as we understand it there is little hint. "Cool" is the adjective most often applied to the state they have attained, in which the fires of desire are quenched, a state according well with the fresh breeze of the mountain tops to which they loved to climb.

3. There are a few women who have found each for herself a niche in the stately temple of classical Sanskrit literature. Historically, the chief interest attaching to the selections given is that one of the authoresses, Gaṅgādevī, was connected with the ancient kingdom of Vijayanagar, being the wife of Prince Kampana, son of one of the founders of the Empire.

4. Throughout the mediæval period nearly all the best religious poetry of India belongs to what is called the *bhakti* school. The word means "affection," but in connection with religion it is probably best translated by the word "devotion." It denotes all the rich feeling which worshippers shower on the god they adore. It covers faith to some extent, but coincides more closely with love, passionate adoration and service. It is almost always connected with a personal view of God. In our anthology Sanskrit, Marāṭhī, Kāshmīrī, Gujarātī, Hindī, Tamil and Malayālam selections illustrate this religious attitude, so that almost every part of India is represented. The emotional and the philosophical utterances of *bhakti* seem sometimes strangely at variance. The passion expended on special shrines and images, the lingering love with which they are described, contrast strongly with the conception of "the One Great Void."<sup>1</sup> It is easy, however, to distinguish in a broad sense between the quiet and meditative *bhakti* which marks most of the literature, and the very passionate and varied feeling which gathers round Kṛishṇa's life at Gokul and Brindāban.

Viṭṭhal or Viṭhobā, the god of Paṇḍharpur, the object of the praises and prayers of Mukṭā Bāī, Janā Bāī, and other women devotees who wrote in Marāṭhī, is really Kṛishṇa; yet their *bhakti* is in the main of the quiet and meditative type, very different from the raptures and complaints of the northern school, represented by Mīrā Bāī and others.

One poetess whom we may conveniently consider along with this group is Lal Ded, of Kashmīr. She was

<sup>1</sup> Selection XI.

a Śaivite Yoginī, but may have been influenced by her contemporary, Sayyid Ali Hamadani, who did much to win Kashmir to Islam. Her verses have no trace of passionate devotion to any special shrine or idol, nothing of the passion of Mīrā or Janā or Āṇḍāl, yet they do speak of a friend able to help and of a search after union with God, such as we find in singers of the *bhakti* school.

On its philosophical side *bhakti* is concerned with release, as due to the realisation of the oneness of the universal spirit, the recognition that worshipped and worshipper are one. Sometimes the realisation of this unity seems more purely intellectual, sometimes more spiritual. The deliverance sought is from birth and re-birth and bondage to action and its fruits—not deliverance from sin as the Christian understands it. It is on the emotional side that it is at once most akin to, and most diverse from, the Christian faith. Akin in its passionate search for a God who can hear, for a Friend who will help, for a Giver of peace and forgiveness; akin, too, in its varying moods, its heights of conscious communion, its periods of bewilderment and darkness, its realisation of the narrowness of the road that leads to the goal. But far apart in its sensuous devotion lavished on a symbol. A Christian reader is forcibly struck with the resemblance between the passionate outpourings of these old Indian seekers and those of the writers of the Old Testament. Again and again a verse from the Psalms might be a free paraphrase of some lines from a Marāṭhī hymn.

5. In the poetry of Zeb-un-Nissa we may find a link between the artificial love songs of the Court and the religious outpourings of the *bhakti* singers. She is said to have been a Sufi and a deeply religious woman, whose experience found expression in a devotion not dissimilar to that of Mīrā Bāī. Whoever was the author of the Diwan-i-Makhfi (Mr. Sirkar denies the possibility of its having been Zeb), this collection of songs, as evidenced by Mrs. Westbrook's translation, contains much of the passionate devotion to the divine beloved that we find,

under another and a very different guise, in Janā Bāi's worship of the idol at Paṇḍharpur.

The poetesses we have hitherto been considering have been mainly inspired by religious longings and aspirations. But alongside of these we must consider an entirely different class of poetry, particularly cultivated under the patronage of the great Moguls, the productions of princes or courtiers, and having for its theme love of a purely earthly character. In this school, too, we find some women who have attained a certain eminence. Several of them wrote in Persian, the language of the Court; and of the authoresses selected two were queens and one a princess. There is bound to be a certain artificiality in all such work, and it is a whole world apart from the utterances of the *bhaktas*, some of whom were not far removed in time from these royal singers. Most of the small amount of Kanarese poetry also that we have been able to include in this collection was written at the suggestion of royal patrons, and deals with subjects of worldly interest.

6. The period between the decline of the Moslem power after the death of Aurangzib (1707) and the Modern Period, which begins with the diffusion of Western ideas due to the rise of the power of the British, furnishes examples of the two classes of poetry referred to above. There were still royal patrons of literature in various parts of India, and we still find poets and poetesses who carried on the *bhakti* tradition and found in religious aspiration the well-spring of their song.

During the eighteenth century, India was distracted by war and strife. The power of the Moguls was rapidly declining. Their Court became vicious and debased; and the poetry which they helped and encouraged tended to deteriorate. Its style became more elaborate and more artificial, and less pure.

Dayā Bāi and Sahajo Bāi, who belonged to the sect of the Charan Dāsīs, may be instanced as examples of poetesses of this period inspired by religious fervour. The monotheism of Muhammadanism had strongly



influenced some of the sects of the north, such as that of Kabīr and of the Charan Dāsīs. It is noteworthy that the *bhakti* expressed in their poetry turns not only towards the divine, but finds a secondary centre in their guru.

7. The eighteenth century was on the whole comparatively barren of poetry of the highest order ; and we pass from it to consider what may be considered the Modern Period. We may perhaps define this period as that during which India has been awake to the impact of the West, both for good and evil, and may date it roughly as commencing about 1800, although, of course, the West had touched Indian life in many ways far earlier than this. But it was not until England ceased to regard India mainly as a happy hunting ground for fortune seekers, and, with dreams of empire, saw visions of higher responsibility to those under her rule, and Christian missionaries won full freedom to bring their message to the land, that the true contribution of Europe to India's development began.

Generalisations are always dangerous, requiring modification, and in a country so vast, so varied, as India, it is peculiarly difficult to make any statement as to the distinctive literary features of any given era ; but perhaps it may be fair to draw attention to the following as the main characteristics of the Modern Period :

(a) The immense impetus given to the use of prose—in some vernaculars the creation of what Mr. De<sup>1</sup> calls a "prose-of-all-work," suitable for educational, scientific and journalistic purposes.

(b) The extension of the range of subjects considered suitable for poetical treatment.

(c) The loving and accurate description of nature.

(d) A note of romanticism—love poetry, which is neither religious symbolism, nor written in praise of courtesans nor in praise of married love.

(e) The insistence on the service of humanity as an accompaniment of religious devotion.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, by S. K. De, M.A., D.Litt.

How far are these traits due to the impact of the West? Mr. De, in his interesting book, points out what an amount of hard spade-work required to be done before the flower of modern Bengali literature could hope to blossom. It is to this spade-work that the civilian and missionary scholars of the earlier part of the period contributed so richly. Very little, if any, of their writings in the vernacular will rank as literature, but they gave an impetus to the scientific study of the vernaculars, to the rediscovery of their ancient literature, and to the use of the vernaculars as a literary vehicle, that was of immense service to those who were destined to use it in verse or prose later on. The study of English and of English literature helped in this development of prose writing and in the cultivation of a simpler style. Westerners are struck with the limitations in the subjects of the older Indian poetry. Religion, in some form or other, is overwhelmingly its pre-occupation; but in the Modern Period we find a much wider range of subjects dealt with, and more of the Western feeling of interest in human beings as such.

As regards the third characteristic noted above, we find that references to nature in the older poetry usually take the form of certain stock metaphors. There are certain birds and flowers with mythological qualities ascribed to them that meet us again and again. Do foreigners feel the English rose to be as heavily overworked as the Indian lotus? When we turn from this to the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore and those influenced by him, we feel as if we had passed from an exhibition of artificial flowers into the pure breath of the garden and the woods. Here, clearly, Western influence has proved creative.

Finally, there is a new insistence on the service of humanity. At many times in the history of India religious reformers have arisen, and of these the nineteenth century also has had its share. But what differentiates these latter from their predecessors is the place that social reform and service have in their programme. Here it is that the influence, not of the West,

indeed, but of that which has come to India through the West, Christianity, is most marked. The *bhakti* movement, while welcoming the outcaste to tread the path of *bhakti* to final deliverance, was little concerned with his social condition in this world of *māya*, but those who owe even a portion of their inspiration to the spirit of Christ, find that attitude impossible; and in the poetry inspired by these movements the spirit of service is latent in the spirit of devotion.

### I. BUDDHIST POETESSES

In the General Introduction we have referred to the motives which led the authors of these poems to abandon their ordinary life and seek release. Here we shall merely add a few notes on some of the reputed authoresses of the selections given. The information is taken from the translation of the chronicle from the Commentary by Dhammapāla, as that is given in Mrs. Rhys Davids' volume. The commentary was not written till the fifth century A.D. (being founded on three older commentaries), while the Buddha, whose contemporaries most of the poetesses claim to be, flourished about 520-480 B.C. The language in which they wrote is Pali, a literary dialect, founded on the vernacular of the time. The "Psalms" themselves were not committed to writing till about 80 B.C. Bearing these facts in mind, and also the fact that various Buddhist scriptures do not always agree in the poems assigned to various authors, Mrs. Rhys Davids writes, "It is only for a very limited section of the Psalms that we can, with any fraction of confidence, associate a given *gāthā* with a putative poetess for whom something approaching historical personality can be claimed. . . . It is very possible—nay, probable—that in all but the poems of a single *śloka*, and in some of two or three *ślokas*, later work of compilation may have been wrought on brief runes handed down from the beginning as the utterance of contemporaries of the founder of Buddhism. . . . Under social conditions such as pre-

veiled where and when Buddhism took its rise, that is to say, where there was considerable intellectual activity but where writing was not used to register its products, there would be a tendency to convert with little delay all utterances deemed worth memorialising into metrical form. Some of these metrical memorial utterances appear as the common property of several Sisters (see below). Once composed, it is quite conceivable that certain Sisters may have made frequent use of them in teaching and preaching."<sup>1</sup>

In the commentary attached to each poem a retrospective biography of the authoress is given, containing much information about her previous births and existences, along with the special incident which led to her attaining Arahantship. The poem is usually the verse in which she exulted on this attainment.

Muttā, "heaping up good under former Buddhas," was, in this Buddha-dispensation, born in the land of Kosala as the daughter of a poor Brāhman, named Oghāṭaka. Come to proper age, she was given to a hunch-backed Brāhman, but she told him she could not continue in the life of the house, and induced him to consent to her leaving the world. She . . . strove after insight till she won Arahantship; then exulting, she repeated the lines ascribed to her."<sup>2</sup>

Mettikā. "Heaping up merit under former Buddhas, she was born during the time of Siddhartha, the Exalted One, in a burgess's family, and worshipped at his shrine by offering there a jewelled girdle. After many births in heaven and on earth, through the merit thereof she became, in this Buddha-dispensation, the child of an eminent Brāhman at Rājagaha."<sup>3</sup>

Paṭāchārā. Her story, as given by the commentator, is too long to repeat in full. A succession of misfortunes deprived her in one day of husband, children, parents and brother, and left her crazy with grief. As she wandered, half naked and mad, she came to where the Buddha was teaching. The congregation said, "Suffer

<sup>1</sup> *Psalms of the Sisters*, Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> VIII.      <sup>3</sup> X.

not that little lunatic to come hither." The Exalted One said, "Forbid her not," and, standing near as she came round again, he said to her, "Sister, recover thou presence of mind." She recovered her senses and told him her sorrows. His line of comfort was,

"Less are the waters of the oceans four,  
Than all the waste of waters shed in tears  
By heart of man who mourneth touched by ill.  
Why waste thy life brooding in bitter woe?"

And further he said, "O Paṭāchārā, to one passing to another world no child or other kin is able to be a shelter or a hiding-place or refuge. Not here, even, can they be such. Therefore let whoso is wise purify his own conduct and accomplish the Path leading even to Nibbāna." She eventually won Arahantship, and was able to comfort other women who had also lost children.<sup>1</sup>

## II. SANSKRIT POETESSES

We have already dealt (p. 14) with Ghoshā, who wrote in Vedic Sanskrit. Of the four ladies whose work in Classical Sanskrit is represented in our collection, Śilā and Vikāṣanītibā are quite unknown; but Gaṅgādevī was a princess of Vijayanagar in the fourteenth century (p. 17), while Priyambadā lived in the district of Faridpur, in East Bengal, seemingly soon after A.D. 1600. She was the daughter of one scholar and the wife of another, and was, like Ghoshā, trained by her father, so that she helped both father and husband in their literary work.

## III. TAMIL POETESSES

Avvai, or Avvaiar, is one of the most popular, if not the most popular, of all the poets and poetesses of South India. So great is the respect and love felt for her that in some parts of South India she is worshipped on Tuesdays. Her poems are so frequently quoted that they have become household words.

Tradition says that she was the child of Bhagavān (god) and Ādi (the first), two wandering pilgrims, who left their children wherever they were born. Thus Avvai was left in an inn at Wariyur, an ancient capital near Trichinopoly. She was brought up by the people of the neighbourhood, and, though they do not appear to have given her any education, she developed poetic gifts and began to sing.

She is said to have lived to a great age and to have led a wandering life, begging her food. The people called her fondly, and other poets in jest, "A singer who sings for a cup of porridge." It was her special privilege to come in contact with people of all grades, and to help them in their time of need.

Āṇḍāl was the daughter of a priest in a noted Vaishṇava temple in South India. As her early associations were with the temple and its ritual, she developed a reverent love for the god Kṛishṇa, who was worshipped there. This devotion developed into an adoring passion for the god, so that when she reached marriageable age she refused to marry any one but him. Subsequently, according to the legend, with the approval of the god she was married to him in the temple of Śrīvilliputhur.

Āṇḍāl is said to be the author of two books, *Tirupavai* and *Tiruvaimalai*, which are included along with the works of other Vaishṇava saints in *Nalāyira Prabandham*. This collection probably dates from about A.D. 1000, and Āṇḍāl is said to have been the ninth of the twelve Ālvārs, who were Vaishṇavite saints and singers, and flourished between the seventh and tenth centuries A.D.

#### IV. KANARESE POETESSES

Mr. Rice, in his *Kanarese Literature*, divides this literature into four periods: (1) Jaina, (2) Liṅgāyat, (3) Vaishṇava, and (4) Modern. The first Kanarese poetess, Kanti, belongs to the Jaina period (born 1105), and seems to have been a quick-witted and highly-talented lady, but unfortunately we have no specimen of her poetry to include here,

Mahādeviakka was born at Uḍataḍi in 1160. King Kansiku wanted to marry her, but she chose rather to live as a nun among Liṅgāyat sannyāsīs. (The Liṅgāyats are a sect of strict Śiva worshippers, who give great reverence to the guru, and worship and meditate on a *liṅga*, which they carry on their person. They came into prominence in the twelfth century.)

Śruṅgarāmma and Honnamma were both poetesses at the court of Chikka Deva Rāya of Mysore (1672-1704). This king was himself an author, and a great patron of literature. He collected a valuable library of historical works, which, unfortunately, was subsequently destroyed by Tipu. Śruṅgarāmma was a Śrī Vaiṣṇavite poetess, and wrote *Padmanīkalyāṇa*, a description of the marriage of Śrīnivāsa and Padmanī. It is written in *sāṅgatyā*, a form of composition meant to be intoned to the accompaniment of a musical instrument.

Honnamma is the most famous of Kanarese poetesses. Her nick-name was "Sanchiya Honni" (Honni of the betel bag). Her teacher was Siṅgarāya, brother of the minister of Chikka Deva Rāya. He told the king that she was most gifted in verse of all sorts. "Tell her to write me a poem," said the king to the queen. In obedience to the royal command, Honnamma wrote *Haḍibadeya Dharma*, a poem on ideal wifehood.

## V. MALAYALAM POETESSES

The only selection from the writings of poetesses in this language is from a poem by Kuṭṭikkuṇṇu Taṅkacchi (1820-1904), the eldest daughter of Ravi Varman Tampi, the famous poet laureate of Travancore, from whom she received her education. The extract given below is from one of her early poems, the *Sthalapurāṇam* of the royal temple at Trivandrum. The poem is based on the section of the Sanskrit *Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇam*, which deals with the same legend. The authoress wrote more than a dozen other works of considerable length in almost all the varieties of Malayālam metrical composition.

## VI. A KASHMĪR POETESS

For this interesting lady, see above p. 17.

## VII. MARĀṬHĪ POETESSES

Four of the five Marāṭhī poetesses, from whom selections appear in our volume, are followers of the *Bhakti Mārga*, the path of devotion.

Muktā Bāi, the oldest and greatest of them, was the sister of Jñāneśvar, Nivṛitti and Sopāndev, and flourished during the thirteenth century of the Christian era. She is the first known Marāṭhī poetess. Her poems are full of philosophical ideas, and, owing to their condensed style, are very difficult to render in English in any adequate fashion. Her writings illustrate the intellectual rather than the emotional side of *bhakti*. As a child she knew both poverty and contempt; for her father was a Brāhman, who after his marriage became a *sannyāsī*, but returned again later to his wife and became the father of four children, a lapse which earned them the scornful name of "*sannyāsī*'s children." The parents seem to have left them early to fend for themselves, and they had to subsist by begging. All of them devoted themselves to the quest of religious deliverance. Nivṛitti, the eldest, having been himself initiated by a guru in whose cave he had sought shelter from a tiger, became in turn guru to his younger brothers and sister. Muktā Bāi frequently acknowledges her debt to him. Tradition says that she died at the age of sixteen, and indeed that the whole family died while still quite young. If so, they must have been instances of that extraordinary precocity of intellect, coupled with bodily frailty, not infrequently met with in India.

Janā Bāi was the servant woman of the poet Nāmdev. She is said to have been a foundling whom he cared for, and her poems show that she rewarded his care with the utmost devotion and reverence. In contrast to Muktā Bāi's, her verses are full of emotion, and of passionate adoration of the image at Pandharpūr. Her style is much simpler, and she expresses her varying



moods of religious elation and depression with much beauty and also much frankness. Her *abhangs* (i.e. hymns) are very popular, especially among women, and are much sung by the devotees of Viṭhobā. Nāmdēv's exact date is a matter of much dispute, some scholars making him a late contemporary of Jñāpēśvar, others considering that he flourished about 1400-1450. We cannot, therefore, say with certainty when Janā Bāi wrote, except that she was later than Mukṭā Bāi.

Bahinā Bāi was a follower of Tukārām, and belongs to the seventeenth century. The selection given is her description in her autobiography of her devotion to a little calf. She was at that time a child of about eleven, married to a man more than three times her age, who seems to have treated her very badly. She had led a wandering life with him and her parents, who were Brāhmins, some financial trouble having broken up their home. Her husband was angry at her love for her calf, and beat her on its account. The death of the calf brought home to her the conviction of the transitoriness of all mortal things, and she turned for consolation to the teaching of Tukārām, who appeared to her in a dream. A severe illness brought her husband to a better state of mind; and both husband and wife went to Dehu, where the poet Tukārām lived, and became his followers.

One other poetess of the *bhakti* school deserves mention, namely Chokhā Meḷā's wife. Chokhā Meḷā was a Mahār, one of the outcastes, but a devout worshipper of Viṭhobā and a poet. His wife, too, composed some verses, of which we quote one specimen, in order that the outcastes of India may be represented in this anthology. We print also a poem by Rāmī, the daughter of a Bengali washerman. Chokhā is said to have died about 1338; so his wife probably comes between Mukṭā Bāi and Janā Bāi in point of time.

Our final selection is from a poem by Mrs. Lakshmi Bāi Tilak, widow of the late Nārāyan Vāman Tilak, so well known as a poet throughout Mahārāshṭra. It is interesting as illustrating one of the great Indian

virtues, the devotion of a wife to her husband ; but, perhaps, because it is the work of a Christian writer, it presupposes a similar devotion on the part of the husband, and emphasizes the incompleteness of either man or woman apart from the other.

### VIII. HINDĪ POETESSES

Of the six Hindī poetesses, examples of whose poems are given below, Mīrā Bāī is by far the best known. She is famed for her compositions, both in Hindī (the Braj dialect of Western Hindī) and in Gujarātī (see introduction to Gujarātī poetesses); and her songs are still widely sung by the women of Gujarāt. There has been some confusion as to the facts of her life, but the following, taken from Mr. Keay's *Hindī Literature*, is based on the latest researches. She was a princess of Rajputana, who was married to Bhojrāj, heir apparent of Kumbha Mahārāṇā of Mewar. Her husband died before he came to the throne, and Kumbha was put to death by another son, Udekarān, who seized the throne in 1469. Mīrā Bāī was a devotee of Kṛishṇa from childhood, and she had already offended her husband's family by refusing to conform to their particular form of worship and by her lavish expenditure on the entertainment of Sādhus. So, when Udekarān succeeded to the throne, he persecuted her so much that she fled from Chitor and became a disciple of Raidās, a Chamār disciple of Rāmānanda. This probably took place about 1470.

Mīrā belonged to the *bhakti* school of poets ; but, unlike the Marāṭhī poetesses of the same school, her devotion was called forth by the Rādhā-Kṛishṇa story, and she helped by her songs to popularise this form of Kṛishṇa worship. To Mīrā Bāī is due the introduction of the further idea of mutual love between Kṛishṇa and his worshipper. It is noteworthy that at times Mīrā Bāī addresses her god as Rāma. Possibly this may be due to the fact that her guru was Rai Dās, a follower of Rāmānanda, who was a worshipper of Rāma.

Our next poetess, Rūpamatī, has a romantic story. She was a Hindu lady of the age of Akbar, and was the wife of Bāz Bahādūr, the last independent Muhammadan ruler of Malwa.<sup>1</sup> She spent seven happy years with her lord, who was passionately fond of music, while she composed delightful songs. In 1560 Akbar sent a force, under Adam Khan, to occupy Malwa. Bāz Bahādūr collected troops to oppose him, but they deserted their leader, who, finding himself thus betrayed, fled. The accounts of Rūpamatī's death vary. One is that she consented to receive Adam Khan, and at the hour appointed she was found dressed in her best, lying dead upon her bed, having taken poison to avoid dishonour. Another is that Bāz Bahādūr gave orders that the women of his harem should be slain in the event of his defeat. The soldiers stabbed Rūpamatī with the rest, as directed, but though wounded she was still alive when Adam Khan came. She allowed her wounds to be dressed, thinking she was to be sent to Bāz Bahādūr, but when she found that Adam Khan meant to keep her, she took poison. Yet another account says she stabbed herself. Bāz Bahādūr fled to the mountains, but after a while went to Delhi to Akbar, and was graciously received and given military command. There is no known collection of Rūpamatī's songs, though they are very popular in Malwa. The selection given is from Cunningham's *Archæological Report* (1864-65), Vol. II.

The next Hindī poetess from whom a selection is given is Shekh Raṅgrezīn, who flourished about 1703. Her poetry, such of it as has survived, is of a very different type from Mirā Bāī's, being in the form of detached verses, chiefly love poems. She wrote in the Braj dialect of Western Hindī. Her story is a romantic one. She was a Muhammadan, and a dyer by trade, but nothing is known of her parentage. A Brāhman poet, named Ālam, sent his turban to her to be dyed, and, by mistake, left in the folds a slip of paper on which he had written half a verse of poetry as follows: "Why

<sup>1</sup> See Frontispiece.

has the waist of a woman, like a golden stick, become thin?" When he received the turban back he found the paper with the verse completed this way: "Having taken away the gold of the waist, the Creator has put it on the bosom." Being surprised, he went to the dyer to ask her who had completed it. On finding that she had done it, he gave her one anna for dying the turban and a thousand *mudras* for the half verse. An acquaintance sprang up, with the result that Ālam became a Muhammadan and married Shekh.

Sahajo Bāi and Dayā Bāi belong to the sect of Charan Dāsīs, and are said to have been sisters. The *•Dayā Bodh* of Dayā Bāi was composed in 1751. Charan Dās was a Baniya by caste, and founded at Delhi, about 1730, a sect which still exists. His teaching laid emphasis on the great importance of the *guru* and of the Word—also on meditation on the Name (of Hari or Rāma) as the means of salvation. He discouraged idolatry and was strongly ethical in his teaching, while he laid great stress on the use of the vernacular for religious writing and preaching. The poems given illustrate several of these special tenets of the sect.

There have been a considerable number of more modern poetesses in Hindī, some of whom are still living. One of these is Śrī Sarasvatī Devī, the daughter of a poet in the district of Azamgarh.

## IX. GUJARĀTĪ POETESSES

First and foremost among these is Mīrā Bāi, but we have already dealt with her life in the introduction to the Hindī selections.

After the period in which Mīrā Bāi flourished—the fifteenth century—there seem to have been no Gujarātī poetesses until the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, when Divālī Bāi and Gavri Bāi flourished, as well as two or three others.

Divālī Bāi was the daughter of a Brāhman living in Dabhoi. Before the great famine of 1791 she had

become a widow and returned to her father's house. Her father, not being able to provide for her, left her in charge of a Sādhu, whom she calls Dādā Guru Bhagwān. This Sādhu, being a devotee of Rāma, taught her the whole of the Rāmāyaṇa. Hence practically all her poetry—about 500 short poems—has for its theme incidents in the life of Rāma. As he represents the ideal of purity and of simplicity of life, her poems are much purer and are couched in simpler language than the poems of those who had Kṛishṇa for their ideal.

Gavṛī Bāī stands out prominently as the only Vedantic poetess of Gujarāt. She was a Nāgar, Brāhman lady of Dungarpur, where she was born in 1759. She lived there for a good many years, attracting by her asceticism the princess of Dungarpur and Jaipur; but she eventually left Dungarpur and took up her residence in Benares, where she ended her days. She was married when only five or six years old, and was widowed within a few months of her marriage. Instead, however, of being in any way crushed by widowhood, she made it a stepping-stone to what she deemed an ideal life. She eventually attained to the practice of *samādhi*, that is, a trance resulting from the restraint of the active powers of the mind. She composed about 650 *padas*, in almost all of which she teaches that the supreme Brahman pervades the universe.

## X. BENGALI POETESSES

Rāmī, so far as our present knowledge goes, is the earliest of all Bengali poetesses. She lived in the first half of the fifteenth century. See the note to her poem, number LXVIII.

Mādhavī (Sanskrit Mādhavī) was an Oṛiya and lived in Puri. She received a good education and was for some time in charge of the accounts of the temple of Jagannāth. When Chaitanya, the Bengali Kṛishṇaite leader, went to Puri in 1509, Mādhavī became one of his disciples. Chaitanya was a sannyāsī, and would not

look at a woman ; but, on account of Mādhavī's learning and deep devotion, he seems to have relaxed the rule in some degree in her case. Since she was thus, in a sense, accepted as a man, she sometimes signed herself Mādhavī Dās (masc.) instead of Mādhavī Dāsī (fem.).

Ānandamayī was born at Vikrampur, East Bengal, in 1752, and was married at the age of nine to a scholar named Ajodhya Rām. She is said to have become more learned than her husband. Her poems, which are striking in style and ornate, but occasionally rather pedantic, are found scattered through *Harilīlā*, a famous work by her uncle, Jaynārāyan.

Mānkumārī was born at Sāgardari, in the district of Jessore. She was a niece of the famous Christian Bengali poet, Michael Madhusūdana Datta, and must therefore have been born in the middle of the nineteenth century. She lost her husband, and thereafter, probably as a result of grief, her poetic genius unfolded itself. Her most notable works are *Kāvya-kusumāñjali* and *Kanakāñjali*.

Pañkajinī Basu was born near Dacca in 1884. She had no English education. She died in 1900, and her poems were published shortly afterwards.

Priyambadā Debī was born in Bengal in 1872, and is a graduate. Her husband, Mr. Tārādās Banerji, died in 1895, and their only child in the following year. Since then she has lived in Calcutta and devoted herself to social service, particularly to educational work among ladies living in the retirement of the zenana.

Nirupamā Debī is the daughter of a barrister, and is related on her father's side to Keshub Chundra Sen. She married Prince Victor of Cooch Behar. Her poems, published in the book called *Dhūp* (Incense) deal with nature, love, religion and other subjects. She is a Brahmo.

Mrs. Kāminī Roy was born in 1864, in the Backerganj district. She graduated in 1884 from the Bethune College, where she became a teacher. When she was twenty-five she published anonymously a volume of poems, *Ālo o Chāya* (Light and Shade), which is exceed-

ingly popular. After the death of her husband, Mr. Kedarnath Roy, she settled in Calcutta and published several other volumes.

Dharendrabālā Singh. In the preface to her book, *Aśrukana*, it is stated that she wrote these poems after the death of her husband in 1914, and that they were edited by her brother-in-law after her death.

Mrs. Sarojabālā (Dās Gupta) Sen is the daughter of Dr. Brajendranāth Seal. *Basanta Prayāna* (The Passing of Spring) was written under the cloud of grief caused by the loss of her husband.

Hemantabālā Dutt, sister of Jibendra Nath Dutt, a poet resident in Chittagong, published in 1910 a group of poems entitled *Śiśir*, and in 1916 a volume of religious poems called *Madhabī*.

#### XI. PERSIAN POETESSES

Of the five poetesses from whose poems selections are given below four are royal ladies. The Moslem kings, both of the earlier and later dynasties, were usually notable patrons of literature; and, as Persian was the Court language, the many major and minor poets who frequented the Court naturally wrote in it. Versifying was an elegant accomplishment, and much of the writing must have been of an ephemeral and very artificial character. But in some instances it was the expression of deep emotion (either earthly love or mystic spiritual yearnings), and was worthy to be ranked as true poetry. Sultan Raziyyā Begum was a remarkable woman. She was the daughter of Shams-ud-din Altamsh, one of the "Slave" kings. When absent from the capital on military expeditions, her father preferred to leave the government in her hands, rather than in those of her brothers, having great confidence in her strength of mind and judgement. She succeeded her brother, Rukmiddin—a dissolute prince who only reigned seven months—in 1236, and showed herself a vigorous ruler. She appeared daily in the durbar, dressed like a man, and carried on the government herself. But she had one weakness, a

partiality for her Master of Horse, an Abyssinian slave, whom she raised to the position of Amir-al-Omara (Commander-in-Chief) over the heads of her nobles. This caused great dissatisfaction and led to a rebellion, headed by a leader called Altunia. Her troops mutinied; her favourite was killed; and she was left to Altunia's tender mercies; but she prevailed on him to marry her and march with her to recover her throne. Both were eventually defeated, taken prisoner and killed. So ended her reign of five and a half years.

Nur Jahan was the wife of the emperor Jehangir, the son of Akbar. She was the granddaughter of a civilian in high position in Teheran. Her father, a poor man, was passing through Kandahar on his way to India when Nur Jehan was born. The circumstances of the family were so bad that the child was exposed by the roadside to die, but a merchant, who was also travelling to India, took pity on her, engaged the mother as a wet nurse, helped the family, and finally introduced them to Akbar. Nur Jehan with her mother used to visit the royal harem, and attracted the attention of young Prince Selim (Jehangir). This coming to the knowledge of Akbar, he advised her marriage to Sherafgan Khan, a young Persian, who was given a property in Bengal. There they lived happily till Jehangir came to the throne. He appointed his foster brother as Viceroy of Bengal, and the Viceroy sent for Sherafgan Khan with a view to obtaining Nur Jehan. Sherafgan took a dagger with him and killed the Viceroy, but was overpowered and slain himself. Nur Jahan was sent as a prisoner to Delhi, where for a considerable time she repulsed the Emperor's advances and was kept among the attendants on his mother. Eventually, however, in 1612, she was married to Jehangir with great pomp; and thereafter she and her family became extremely powerful, her father being made Prime Minister. On the whole her influence was good, restraining the Emperor's cruelty and debauchery, and increasing the grandeur as well as the good management of the Court. After Jehangir's death,



in 1627, her influence departed, and she was kept under restraint by her brother until her death in 1646.

Zeb-un-Nisa Begum was a daughter of the Emperor Aurangzib and was born at Daulatabad, in 1638. Her mother was a Persian. She was a very talented poetess and a great patron of poets and scholars, carrying on thus the tradition of most of the Mogul emperors, though not of her father, who regarded poets as flatterers. Her pen name was Zeb. Some have ascribed to her the collection of poems called the *Divan-i-Makhfi*, but this is most probably incorrect. So also in regard to many of the love adventures attributed to her. She seems to have been a deeply religious woman, but a Sufi, or mystic, unlike her sternly orthodox father. For some years she was imprisoned by him in Delhi—possibly because of complicity in her brother Prince Akbar's rebellion—and was deprived of her revenue in 1681. She remained in restraint and obscurity until her death in 1702.

Zinat-un-Nisa was another daughter of Aurangzib. She built the Zinat-ul-Masjid in Delhi, in which her tomb is. Her epitaph, written by herself, is given below.

A different type of poetesses were women belonging to the courtesan and dancing girl classes. Most of their verses are immoral, but Shirin, who was a Lucknow dancing girl, forms an honourable exception. She wrote in both Urdu and Persian. The selection given is from her Persian verses.

## XII. URDU POETESSES

Nawwab Bahu Begam, known in poetry as Dulhan, was the queen of Nawwab Asif-ud-Dawla Bahadur, King of Oudh from 1775 to 1797, and founder of the city of Lucknow.

Bahu Begam, known in poetry as Bahu, was the queen of Nawwab Yusuf Ali Khan, ruler of the Rampur State from 1855 to 1865. He helped the British during the Mutiny. His great-grandson is the present ruler of the state.

## XIII. POETESSES WHO WRITE IN ENGLISH

We have included a few specimens of poetry written by Indian ladies in English. They are from the works of Aru Dutt, Toru Dutt, Ellen Goreh and Sarojinī Naidu.

Aru and Toru Dutt were the second and third children of a family of three, all destined to die young. Their parents were high caste Bengalis, converts to Christianity. Their brother died in 1865, and their father brought his two girls to Europe in 1869, first to France and then to Italy and England. In November, 1873, they returned to Bengal, and the last four years of Toru's life were spent in her old home, her father's garden house in Calcutta. During this time she wrote her translations from the French, her original poems, and a French romance, and studied Sanskrit. Her sister died in 1874, and she herself succumbed to consumption in 1877, at the age of twenty-one. Her knowledge of French and English was astonishing.

Miss Ellen Goreh is a Deaconess of St. Faith's, Allahabad. She was born in India, but educated in England, and her religious poems have nothing distinctively Indian about them. Miss Goreh had some correspondence with Frances Ridley Havergal, and her poems, in their style, expression and range of subjects, somewhat suggest the writings of that lady. They breathe a fervent Christian devotion, but the reader has no reason to suspect them of an Indian origin.

Mrs. Sarojinī Naidu, while writing in English, seeks to fill her verse with the atmosphere of India. One feels, in reading it, what a fortunate thing it was that Mr. Gosse directed her youthful ambition, kindly but very firmly, towards expressing the life of India and not that of England. Like Toru Dutt, she was a precocious genius. Mr. Gosse writes of her, that when she came to London first, at the age of sixteen, "She was already marvellous in her mental maturity, amazingly well read, and far beyond a Western child in all her acquaintance with the world." But, unlike Toru Dutt, she was destined to sing and work for the land she loves, and to taste the joys and cares of married life and motherhood.

## VEDIC INDIA

### I. A PRAYER TO THE AŚVINS<sup>1</sup>

GHOSHĀ

VEDIC SANSKRIT

Your car, the swiftly-rolling, circumambient,  
To be saluted day and night by worshippers,  
Aśvins, that car of yours we here invoke,  
Just as the name of father, easy to entreat.

Arouse the lovely hymns and make our thoughts to  
swell,  
Stir up abundant riches,—that is our desire ;  
Make glorious our heritage, ye Aśvin pair ;  
Yea, make us for our princes like the Soma dear.

Ye are good luck for her who groweth old at home ;  
The slow—yea even the slowest one—ye help him on ;  
Ye two are called physicians, healers of the blind,  
Yea of the feeble and the one with broken limbs.

I call to you, O Aśvins, listen to my cry,  
And give your help to me as parents to a son ;  
Friendless am I, bereft of relative, and poor,  
Save me, O save me from the curse which rests on me.

Upon your chariot ye did bring to Vimada,  
To be his consort, Purumitra's lovely maid ;  
Came to the weakling's wife in answer to her call,  
And to Puramdhi gave the boon of motherhood.

<sup>1</sup> *The Aśvins*, two riders connected with early dawn, are the Vedic parallel to the Twin Horsemen of the Greeks and Romans. They are light-bringers, healers and helpers.

Unto the singer Kali, who had reached old age,  
 Ye gave anew the boon of fresh and youthful strength ;  
 'Twas you that lifted Vandana from out the pit ;  
 Ye gave to Viśpalā the power at once to walk.

On Pedu, Aśvins, ye bestowed a snow-white horse,  
 Whose strength from forces ninety-nine compounded is,  
 A steed, praiseworthy, bearing rider at full speed,  
 Bliss-yielding, Bhaga-like, to be invoked of men.

Come on that chariot which is speedier than thought,  
 That chariot, Aśvins, which the Ribhus<sup>1</sup> built for you ;  
 On yoking which the daughter of the sky<sup>2</sup> is born.  
 And from Vivasvat the auspicious day and night.

This praise-song have we made for you, O Aśvins,  
 Have fashioned it as Bhrigus<sup>3</sup> build a wagon ;  
 Have decked it as the bride is for the bridegroom,  
 Presenting it to you as our own offspring.<sup>4</sup>

*Tr. H. D. Griswold.*

<sup>1</sup> The Ribhus are the artificers of heaven.

<sup>2</sup> That is Ushas, the dawn.

<sup>3</sup> Name of a tribe among the early Aryans.

<sup>4</sup> These nine stanzas are taken from *Rigveda*, X, 39.

## II

### EARLY BUDDHIST DAYS

#### PEACE AND FREEDOM

##### II. THE BUDDHA'S WAY

VĀSITTHĪ

PALI

VĀSITTHĪ had become distraught with grief at the death of her son. Meeting the Buddha, she, through his influence, regained her sanity and was admitted to the order. She soon attained Arahantship;<sup>1</sup> and, reflecting on her attainment, she exulted thus :

Now here, now there, lightheaded, crazed with grief,  
Mourning my child, I wandered up and down,  
Naked, unheeding, streaming hair, unkempt,  
Lodging in scourgings of the streets, and where  
The dead lay still, and by the chariot-roads—  
So three years long I fared, starving, athirst.

And then at last I saw Him, as He went  
Within that blessed city Mithilā :  
Great Tamer of untamed hearts, yea, Him,  
The Very Buddha, Banisher of fear.

Came back my heart to me, my errant mind ;  
Forthwith to Him I went low worshipping,  
And there, e'en at His feet, I heard the Norm.  
For of His great compassion on us all,  
'Twas He who taught me, even Gotama.

<sup>1</sup> Arahantship, the state of the "arahant," the man who in this life has reached *nirvāna*, in Pali *nibbāna*, i.e. release from all bonds.

I heeded all He said and left the world  
 And all its cares behind, and gave myself  
 To follow where He taught, and realise  
 Life in the Path to great good fortune bound.  
 Now all my sorrows are hewn down, cast out,  
 Uprooted, brought to utter end,  
 In that I now can grasp and understand  
 The base on which my miseries were built.

*Tr. C. A. F. Rhys Davids.*

### III. SEEK LIFE NO MORE

SUMANĀ

PALI

Hast thou not seen sorrow and ill in all  
 The springs of life? Come thou not back to birth!  
 Cast out the passionate desire again to Be.  
 So shalt thou go thy ways calm and serene.<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. C. A. F. Rhys Davids.*

### IV. MY HEART IS HEALED

UBBIRĪ

PALI

She lost her daughter Jīvā, which means "Alive."  
 The Buddha, seeing her weeping near the charnel-field,  
 said to her, "Burnt in this cemetery are some 84,000 of  
 thy daughters. For which of them dost thou weep?"  
 He is the speaker of the first half of the psalm.

O Ubbirī, who wailest in the wood,  
 Crying, "O Jīvā! O my daughter dear!"  
 Come to thyself! Lo in this burying-ground  
 Are burnt full many a thousand daughters dear,  
 And all of them were named like unto her.  
 Now which of all those Jīvās dost thou mourn?

Pondering this teaching, she reached Arahantship  
 and spoke the second half of the psalm.

<sup>1</sup> This is the Buddha's Message to Sumanā put into verse by the Sister herself.

Lo! from my heart the hidden shaft is gone!  
 The shaft that nestled there hath He removed.  
 And that consuming grief for my dead child,  
 Which poisoned all the life of me, is dead.  
 To-day my heart is healed, my yearning stayed,  
 And all within is purity and peace.  
 Lo! I for refuge to the Buddha go—  
 The only wise—the Order<sup>1</sup> and the Norm.<sup>2</sup>

*Tr. C. A. F. Rhys Davids.*

### V. THE WINNING OF FREEDOM

SĀMĀ

PĀLI

Four times, nay, five, I sallied from my cell,  
 And roamed afield to find the peace of mind  
 I sought in vain, and governance of thoughts  
 I could not bring into captivity.  
 To me, even to me, on that eighth day  
 It came: all craving ousted from my heart.  
 Mid many sore afflictions, I had wrought  
 With passionate endeavour and had won!  
 Craving was dead and the Lord's will was done.

*Tr. C. A. F. Rhys Davids.*

### VI. COOL AM I NOW

SAṄGHĀ

PĀLI

Home have I left, for I have left my world!  
 Child have I left, and all my cherished herds!  
 Lust have I left, and Ill-will, too, is gone,  
 And Ignorance have I put far from me;  
 Craving and root of Craving overpowered,  
 Cool am I now, knowing Nibbāna's<sup>3</sup> peace.

*Tr. C. A. F. Rhys Davids.*

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the Buddhist ascetic order.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* the *dhmma*, the whole rule of Buddhist life.

<sup>3</sup> See I, note 1.

## VII. WEEP NOT

PAṬĀCHĀRĀ

PALI

Certain persons who had suffered bereavement came to Paṭāchārā and told their sorrow. The Sister spake thus :

The way by which men come we cannot know ;  
 Nor can we see the path by which they go.  
 Why mournest then for him who came to thee,  
 Lamenting through thy tears : " My son ! my son !"  
 Seeing thou knowest not the way he came,  
 Nor yet the manner of his leaving thee ?  
 Weep not, for such is here the life of man.  
 Unasked he came, unbidden went he hence.  
 Lo ! ask thyself again whence came thy son  
 To bide on earth this little breathing space.  
 By one way come and by another gone,  
 As man to die and pass to other births—  
 So hither and so hence—why would ye weep ?

They, hearing her doctrine, were filled with agitation and renounced the world. They soon attained to Arahantship, and exulted in those words, " The way by which men come," adding other verses as follows :

Lo ! from my heart the hidden shaft is gone,  
 The shaft that nestled there she hath removed,  
 And that consuming grief for my dead child,  
 Which poisoned all the life of me, is dead.  
 To-day my heart is healed, my yearning stayed,  
 Perfected the deliverance wrought in me.  
 Lo ! I for refuge to the Buddha go—  
 The only wise—the Order and the Norm.<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. C. A. F. Rhys Davids.*

<sup>1</sup> See notes on IV.



## VIII. FREEDOM

MUTTĀ

PALI

O free indeed! O gloriously free  
 Am I in freedom from three crooked-things :—  
 From quern, from mortar, from my crookbacked lord!  
 Ay, but I'm free from rebirth and from death,  
 And all that dragged me back is hurled away.

*Tr. Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids.*

## IX. 'TIS WELL WITH ME

SUMAṄGALA'S MOTHER

PALI

O woman well set free! how free am I,  
 How thoroughly free from kitchen drudgery!  
 Me stained and squalid 'mong my cooking-pots  
 My brutal husband ranked as even less  
 Than the sunshades he sits and weaves away.  
 Purged now of all my former lust and hate,  
 I dwell, musing at ease beneath the shade  
 Of spreading boughs—O, but 'tis well with me!

*Tr. Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids.*

## X. THE BREATH OF LIBERTY

METTIKĀ

PALI

Though I be suffering and weak, and all  
 My youthful spring be gone, yet have I come,  
 Leaning upon my staff, and clomb aloft  
 The mountain peak.

My cloak thrown off,  
 My little bowl o'erturned: so sit I here  
 Upon the rock. And o'er my spirit sweeps  
 The breath of Liberty! I win, I win  
 The triple lore!<sup>1</sup> The Buddha's will is done!

*Tr. Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids.*

<sup>1</sup> Three marvellous powers which the wise arahant might win.

# III

## MEDIÆVAL INDIA

### THE SEARCH FOR THE ABSOLUTE

#### XI. ONE GREAT VOID

MUKTĀ BĀI

MARĀṬHĪ

Where but the One without another dwells,  
And never whisper of this world may come,  
There all is one great void, all but one void:  
Find you your own means thither to attain.  
Muktā Bāi says, "Son of Vateśvar, see  
Thou ever bind thyself to that great truth,  
That 'Thou art He.'"<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

#### XII. GUIDANCE OF THOUGHT

LAL DED

KĀSHMĪRĪ

Put thou thy thoughts upon the path of immortality.  
If thou leave them without guidance, into evil state  
will they fall.  
There, be thou not fearful, but be thou very  
courageous.  
For they are like unto a suckling child, that tosseth  
restless on its mother's bosom.

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

#### XIII. THE ALL-PERVADING

MUKTĀ BĀI

MARĀṬHĪ

Within material forms he who is void  
Of qualities lies stored. But wealth of form  
He owns not, though his devotees  
Ascribe it to him; for such yearnings rise

<sup>1</sup> Sākhre Saṁvād, 16.

Within the unreleased soul, though everywhere  
 The Infinite lies hid within our hearts.  
 Nivṛitti,<sup>1</sup> who has torn from out his soul  
 All seed of passion, certainly declares  
 That all are one ; and Mukṭā Bāi,  
 With mind firm fixed upon the road  
 To freedom<sup>2</sup>—road that ne'er can weary one—  
 Attains the knowledge of the Endless One,  
 Who fills finite and infinite alike.<sup>3</sup>

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

#### XIV. THE MYSTERY OF BRAHMA

GAVRĪ BĀI

GUJARĀTĪ

Only one who has had the experience can understand  
 the mystery of Brahma.<sup>4</sup>

Without the knowledge of this mystery error cannot be  
 done away with.

Until error passes away, tell me, how can *karma* be  
 done away with ?

And, unless *karma* be done away with, one cannot  
 attain the great mystery.

*Only one who has had the experience can understand the  
 mystery of Brahma.*

Without learning this secret, doubts cannot be removed,  
 And without the removing of doubts all is uncertain.

By the telling of a story one grasps its full meaning.

How can I attain to the true level without living up to  
 this mystery ?

*Only one who has had the experience can understand the  
 mystery of Brahma.*

If one does not grasp the secret meaning of the great  
 Truth.

Then, through not understanding it, the meaning itself  
 can avail nothing.

<sup>1</sup> The brother and *guru*, i.e. religious teacher, of Mukṭā Bāi.

<sup>2</sup> Freedom, i.e. Release.

<sup>3</sup> Sākhre, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Brahman, or Brahma, is the Absolute of Hinduism.

Not by merely discriminating between a good spirit and  
a bad one

Can the mark of the impress of previous actions be  
effaced.

*Only one who has had the experience can understand the  
mystery of Brahma.*

Be it known to you that one who, having experienced  
Brahma, has nothing left but the ethereal body,  
That one alone has attained to the perception that the  
real nature of the human soul is one and the same  
with the Divine Spirit animating the universe.

Gavrī has realised that spirit and Supreme Spirit are  
one, and yet some will not relinquish the belief that  
they are two.

*Only one who has had the experience can understand the  
mystery of Brahma.*

*Tr. Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Ramanbai M. Nilkanth.*

## XV. THE HOME OF THE HEART

MUKTĀ BĀI

MARĀṬHĪ

Where never darkness comes my home I've made ;  
There my delightsome lodging ever find.  
That perfect shelter cannot fail our need ;  
Going and coming trouble us no more.  
Beyond all vision and above all spheres,  
He, our delight, our inmost soul indwells.  
He, Mukṭā says, is our heart's only home.<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

## XVI. HIS GLORY SHINES RESPLENDENT

MUKTĀ BĀI

MARĀṬHĪ

Though he is void of form, yet have mine eyes  
Beheld him, and his glory shines  
Resplendent on my sight. Do thou, my mind,  
Grasp then that inner, secret form of his,

<sup>1</sup> *Vārkarī Sant Saṅgraha*, 81, p. 37.

Worthy to be conceived of by the soul.  
That which transcends our mind, no attributes  
Should limit, for in it our senses find  
Their ending. Mukṭā says, "Though words cannot  
Contain him, yet in him all words exist."<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

### XVII. WHAT THEN IS JOY, WHAT GRIEF?

MUKTĀ BĀI

MARĀṬHĪ

After our joy is finished, sorrow comes  
To meet us, and, that meeting o'er,  
She tarries not. What then is joy? What grief?  
For both alike are Ignorance, beyond which  
Pass we.  
Mukṭā Bāi calls, "Awaken, Chāṅga";<sup>2</sup>  
And, at her call, the Essential Self  
Hears and awakes within him.<sup>3</sup>

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

### XVIII. A MIND FREE FROM DUALITY

LAL DED

KĀSHMĪRĪ,

He who hath deemed another and himself as the same,  
He who hath deemed the day (of joy) and the night (of  
sorrow) to be alike,  
He whose mind hath become free from duality,  
He, and he alone, hath seen the Lord of the chiefest of  
the gods.

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

### XIX. NON-DUALITY

MUKTĀ BĀI

MARĀṬHĪ

Sleep calm and safe, my child, where, far beyond  
All talk of form or formlessness,  
Thy cradle has been swung within  
The very lotus of the heart itself.  
Mukṭā at hand calls to thee lovingly.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 80, p. 36. <sup>2</sup> Chāṅgdev, see note 1, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Sākhre Saṁvād, 15.

Praising *advait*, they give it names of Peace,  
Calm resignation, freedom from  
The body's chain. Thus, too, Vateśvar's son,  
Chāṅga,<sup>1</sup> is stripped bare of desire  
And Mukṭā calms him, showing wisdom's light.<sup>2</sup>

• *Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

## XX. IMPERMANENCE OF EVERYTHING MATERIAL

LAL DED

KĀSHMĪRĪ

For a moment saw I a river flowing.  
For a moment saw I no bridge or means of crossing.  
For a moment saw I a bush all flowers.  
For a moment saw I nor rose nor thorn.

For a moment saw I a cooking hearth ablaze.  
For a moment saw I nor hearth nor smoke.  
For a moment saw I the mother of all the Pāṇḍavas.<sup>3</sup>  
For a moment saw I an aunt of a potter's wife.

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

## XXI. DEFILEMENT

CHOKHĀ'S WIFE

MARĀTHĪ

"The flesh is defiled,"—so they all declare;  
But the spirit is pure, clearly discerning.  
Without defilement is no flesh created,  
Anywhere in all the world.  
The defilement of flesh is in the flesh itself, of a surety.  
So says the wife of Chokhā, the Mahār.<sup>4</sup>

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

<sup>1</sup> Chāṅga, or Chāṅgdev, is said to have been a follower of *yoga*, who was converted to *bhakti* and became a disciple of Mukṭā Bāi. Various names are given in the *abhaṅga* to *advait* (the state of final union), in the same way as a mother, while swinging the cradle, calls her baby by different names.

<sup>2</sup> Sākhre Saṁvād, 7.

<sup>3</sup> The Pāṇḍavas and their mother, Kuntī, disguised as mendicant Brāhmins, found refuge in a potter's house. They are the legendary heroes of the great Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata*.

<sup>4</sup> The Mahārs are a tribe of outcastes found in most parts of the Marāṭhā country and Central India.

## XXII. TRUE RELEASE

LAL DED

KĀSHMĪRĪ

Some, though they be sound asleep, are yet awake ;  
 On others, though they be awake, hath slumber fallen.  
 Some, though they bathe in sacred pools, are yet unclean ;  
 Others, though they be full of household cares, are yet  
 free from action.

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

## XXIII. TOO LATE, TOO LATE

LAL DED

KĀSHMĪRĪ

By a way I came, but I went not by the way.<sup>1</sup>  
 While I was yet on the midst of the embankment, with  
 its crazy bridges, the day failed for me.  
 I looked within my poke and not a cowry was there.  
 What shall I give for the ferry fee ?

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

## THE WAY TO GOD

## XXIV. BLIND ONE AM I

JANĀ BĀĪ

MARĀTHĪ

Blind one am I, and he that was my staff,  
 Where hideth he ?  
 In what strange woodland tarriest thou, my hind,  
 While I, thy dumb fawn, stray lost and seek my  
 home in vain ?  
 Apart from thee what can I do ?  
 How longer hold to life ?  
 O let me meet my mother !<sup>2</sup> Such the prayer  
 The servant, Janī, pours before the saints.

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

<sup>1</sup> "The highway is birth as a human being capable of gaining salvation." The soul must cross the river Vaitarani, and needs money in the mouth for the ferry fee. "The moral is that, inasmuch as birth in a human body is the only chance that a soul has of being saved, when it is fortunate enough to obtain such a birth it should spend its lifetime in gaining a knowledge the Supreme Self" (*Grierson and Barnett*).

<sup>2</sup> That is, Viṭhobā.

XXV. FAIN WOULD I REACH MY HOME

LAL DED

KĀSHMĪRĪ

With a rope of untwisted thread am I towing a boat upon  
the ocean.

Where will my God hear? Will He carry even me  
over?

Like water in goblets of unbaked clay do I slowly waste  
away.

My soul is in a dizzy whirl. Fain would I reach my  
home.

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

XXVI. TANGLED IN DARKNESS I

JANĀ BĀĪ

MARĀṬHĪ

Tangled in darkness I,  
In the deep night of worldly ignorance,  
From this, O Govind, dearest bliss of Yaśodā,<sup>1</sup>  
Set thou me free.

Close to thy side no place is found  
For such dark ignorance.

Thy fellowship divine  
Brings sanctity to men.  
Needs were, Brahma Itself  
Thereby were purer made.

By this e'en Ajāmela's<sup>2</sup> sin  
Was cleansed, so honest Janī says.

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

XXVII. SEEK FOR THE FRIEND

LAL DED

KĀSHMĪRĪ

O heedless one! speedily lift up thy foot :  
Now it is dawn : seek thou for the Friend.  
Make to thyself wings : lift thou up the winged (feet);  
Now it is dawn : seek thou for the Friend.

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

<sup>1</sup> *Yaśodā*, the foster mother of Govind, *i.e.* Kṛishṇa.

<sup>2</sup> *Ajāmela*, an outcaste and criminal, belonging to the Māṅg class.



## XXVIII. GOD'S CARE

LAL DED

KASHMIRĪ

Ah, restless mind! have no fear within thy heart.  
 The Beginningless One Himself taketh thought for thee,  
 (And considereth) how thy hunger may fall from thee.  
 Utter, therefore, to Him alone the cry of salvation.

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

## XXIX. STRAIT IS THE GATE

JANĀ BĀĪ

MARĀTHĪ

Hard is devotion,—like a pit of fire.  
 To enter such a whirlpool, is that not hard?  
 Hard is devotion,—hard as a poison draught;  
 It seems the soul must e'en despair of it.  
 Hard is devotion, hard indeed is it,  
 As the sword's sharpened edge, which who may bear?  
 Hard is devotion,—such has Janī proved it.  
 Yet through devotion and the fellowship  
 Of saintly souls the goal may be attained.

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

## XXX. THY FEET, MY PARADISE

JANĀ BĀĪ

MARĀTHĪ

May I but cling to thy dear feet,  
 No other Paradise crave I.  
 With heart of faith thy name I'll sing,  
 O Ātmārām,<sup>1</sup> true friend indeed.  
 Before thy feet I bow for aye:  
 Then being and its ills depart.  
 I'll feast mine eyes upon thy form,  
 And utter thus my heart's full joy.  
 Thou who dost help the helpless one,  
 And in thine hand the discus bear'st,—  
 Janī, the servant, ever holds  
 Within her heart the thought of thee.

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

<sup>1</sup> Ātmārām, "Joy of the soul."

XXXI. THE POWER OF HARI'S NAME

MUKTĀ BĀĪ

MARĀTHĪ

Above beginning and beyond continuance  
The worshipper of Hari rises free.  
Within, without, for him Hari alone exists.  
Why, then, should he now seek the holy shrines ?  
The invocation of the all-powerful Name  
Contains the virtue of all sacred texts.  
By this name dull-witted man is freed.  
Through it the stones themselves float on the sea.  
Muktā by Hari's name is freed for aye ;  
Neither rebirth nor death remains for us.<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

XXXII. CALL UPON RĀMA

DIVĀLĪ BĀĪ

GUJARĀTĪ

The troubles of all existence are removed, if we call  
upon Rāma.  
To-day you will receive happiness, if you call upon Rāma.  
I, though a widow, have obtained (the joy of) divine  
contemplation; I call upon Rāma.  
I, this widow, will constantly call upon Rāma.  
Let Divālī always pray to thee and call upon thee, Rāma.

*Tr. Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Ramanbai M. Nilkanth.*

XXXIII. RESTLESS TILL WE REST IN THEE

DAYĀ BĀĪ

HINDĪ

O great Lord, the source of happiness,  
Beloved of all, praise be unto thee.  
Thou that knowest the secret of the heart, thou ocean  
of mercy.  
Dayā bows to thee.  
Thy impersonal form is like the ocean of immortality,  
Which is very deep and unfathomable.

<sup>1</sup> Sākhre, 10.

The waves of joy are constantly rising,  
But my heart is restless.

Thy real form is such that all desires of my mind are  
fulfilled ;  
Having seen the marvel, Dayā worships with great  
feeling.

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

#### XXXIV. HARI'S NAME

SAHAJO BĀI

HINDĪ

The name of God is as valuable as the philosopher's  
stone,

And it is found only in the house of wealthy persons.

A poor man does not know the value of it,

And therefore Sahajo says he loses it.

Sahajo says, " In the heart in which God's name is,  
there is always joy.

Without His name, even the beautiful, the rich and  
kings are cursed."

Sahajo is flowing away on the water of the ocean of  
this world ;

There is darkness, and the rain is falling heavily ;

But the boat in the midst of it is the name of Hari,

Which carries men to the other side of the ocean.

Sahajo says, " Sitting on the mountain one may perform  
penance ;

He may endure the rain, the cold and the heat of the  
sun,

But the name of Hari is greater than all these."

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

#### XXXV. THE TRUE GURU

DAYĀ BĀI

HINDĪ

Charan Dās, a great *guru*, is like Brahma, a dwelling-  
place of joy,

A remover of all troubles, a giver of happiness :

Dayā bows down to thee.

Dayā, under the influence of actions, had fallen into the dark well of this world.

My *guru*, by giving me the rope of knowledge, took me out when I was drowning.

He is filled with joy, the whole day circling round in it. He is wonderfully beautiful.

Therefore Dayā has set her mind on him.

In this world there is no one so generous as the true *guru*,

Because he gives such wonderful teaching,

Which bears a soul safe to the other side of the ocean of the world.

Those who serve the lotus feet of their *guru* for their own welfare,—

Dayā says, they forget the dream of this world and go straight to the immortal world.

The true *guru* is like Brahma himself :

Do not consider him to be only a man.

Dayā says, those who consider him to be only a man, They are like beasts.

Always worship your *guru* and bow down your head to him.

Dayā says he will always give them real happiness by showing them the real form of Hari.

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

### XXXVI. THE FALSE GURU

SAHAJO BĀI

HINDĪ

Sahajo says, many *gurus* walk to and fro,  
But they have not knowledge, meditation and remembrance.

They catch many people by the arm,  
But they are not able to send one man across to find salvation.

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

## XXXVII. HINDRANCES

SAHAJO BĀI

HINDI

Sahajo says, "He in whose heart dwells illusion,—  
 His heart is impure, his body wastes away.  
 He does not love Hari,  
 And therefore he is always unhappy."  
 If illusion dwells in the body like a deer in a field,  
 Then how can the field grow?  
 Whatever is sown is eaten up,  
 And the mind is not set on Hari.

A proud man who wants praise for himself—  
 His face is full of dust,  
 He is puffed up with vanity,  
 And he is not afraid of sinning.  
 He wants to have the lordship,  
 But he does not want the Lord.  
 Sahajo says, "A proud person's heart is very low;  
 It cannot be lifted up."

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

## XXXVIII. THE VISION OF GOD

MUKTĀ BĀI

MARĀṬHĪ

Our destiny and those past deeds of ours  
 That called for payment, all  
 Are auspicious now. So set we forth  
 To seek that further bank, Release.  
 That which, erst sprung from the Essential Source,  
 Would merge itself within that Source again.  
 We turn a deaf ear to the world's entanglement.  
 Quickly we learned to sift the false and true;  
 For all our heart was filled with Hari, Lord.  
 From out the formless came the embodied forth,  
 Now Infinite and Finite, joined, are one.  
 Those motions of the mind that hold desire,  
 And those that feel it not, alike must be  
 The sport of Vishṇu. Mukṭā Bāi, whose heart  
 Is set on Freedom, and who, free herself,

Stands on the bank, Release, she, sir, can see  
Vaikuṇṭh<sup>1</sup> himself in all things through and through.<sup>2</sup>

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

XXXIX. I GAZED UPON HIM

LAL DED

KĀSHMĪRĪ

I, Lallā, wearied myself seeking for him and searching.  
I laboured and strove even beyond my strength.  
I began to look for him, and lo, I saw that bolts were on  
his door ;  
And even in me, as I was, did longing for him, become  
fixed ;  
And there, where I was, I gazed upon Him.<sup>3</sup>

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

XL. BAHINĀ AND HER CALF

BAHINĀ BĀĪ

MARĀṬHĪ

It was I who loosed the calf,  
When she went to drink her milk ;  
To the milking, too, she came along with me.

It was I who gave her water,  
It was I who brought her grass,  
And apart from me her mind was ill at ease.

When I went to draw the water,  
That calf came lowing after,  
As if I'd been a cow without a tail.

If that calf were once but free,  
Then she had no wish to stay  
Beside her mother cow, you may be sure.

<sup>1</sup> Vaikuṇṭha is the heaven of Viṣṇu, but is used here of the god himself.

<sup>2</sup> Sākhre, 39.

<sup>3</sup> "In her unregenerate days Lallā had striven to find God. Then, by God's grace, she was permitted to see that the door of approach to Him was barred to all human effort, and that no strivings of hers were of avail. So she stood there, outside the door, full of naught but longing love, and He revealed Himself to her, for she found Him in herself" (*Grierson and Barnett*).

By night upon my bed  
She would quiver as she lay ;  
The Purāṇa when she heard, she would sob.

When I went to hear the *kathā*,<sup>1</sup>  
She too would come along,  
And stand listening to that *kathā* tranquilly.

In the byre we'd leave the cow  
And to the *kathā* wend ;  
And when I went to bathe, then too she came with me.

Thus in many ways that calf  
Refused to part from me,  
And I too found my joy in being with her.

Were I grinding, were I pounding,  
Or were I fetching water home,  
I found the world but dull indeed without her ;

While nightly at the *kathā*  
The love we bore each other  
My parents saw, for she and I went with them.

Then that *swāmī*, Jayārām,  
By the witness of his spirit,  
Felt the presence of a soul within that calf ;

Said, " Bring the calf in hither,  
If its soul yearns for the *kathā*.  
Beast we may not deem it, for its spirit Hari knows."

Then he had the calf brought in,  
And he gave it there a place,  
And felt satisfied to see it resting there.

Then through fate, that is the merit  
Of my former life, me too  
He called with kindly, gracious words.

His gaze fell full upon us,  
His hand caressed us both,  
With no heed to what the people might be saying.

<sup>1</sup> *Kathā*, a legend of a god related with music and singing.

Then light dawned on my soul.  
Before his feet I fell,  
And the calf likewise fell down there at his feet,  
To the wonder of all people who were there.

*Tr. Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu.*

## LOVERS OF KṚISHṆA<sup>1</sup>

### XLI. KṚISHṆA

PRIVAMBADĀ

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT

Who sports upon the Jumna's leafy bank,  
Who Kāmsa slew, and other demon foes,  
Longed for by all the cowherd folk of Braj,  
Adored with love-filled looks from lotus eyes  
By shy sweet milk-maids in their youthful bloom,  
His head with peacock feathers gaily crested,  
His fair form bent in graceful triple curve,  
Braja's dark-hued Apollo with his flute,  
Remover of the pains and burdens of the world,  
Govinda, him I worship.

*Tr. J. N. C. Ganguly.*

### XLII. SELF-SURRENDER

MĪRĀ BĀĪ

HINDĪ

Kanh have I bought ; the price he asked I paid :  
Some cry, "Too great," while others jeer, "'Twas  
small":  
I paid in full, weighed to the utmost grain,  
My love, my life, my self, my soul, my all.

*Tr. Sir George Grierson.*

<sup>1</sup> The worship of Kṛishṇa, as he is said to have lived and sported at Gokul, Mathurā and Brindāban, on the banks of the Jumna (this countryside is called Braj), has produced a special type of poetry, filled with rich feeling and fervent devotion, in some cases expressive of a very deep religious experience, in others sensuously beautiful and full of symbolism, but also highly erotic. The word Kṛishṇa is colloquially corrupted to "Kanh." He is also called Govind, Manmohan, "Mind-bewilderer," Giridhar, "Mountain-holder," and other names.



## XLIII. WE SHALL SING HIS PRAISES

ĀṆḌĀL

TAMIL

O people who live in the world,  
 Would you hear what we are going to do to our God?  
 We shall sing the praises of our heavenly God, who made  
     the ocean of milk his bed.  
 We shall neither take ghee nor drink milk,  
 We shall not paint our eyes after our morning bath,  
 We shall not wear flowers. Further,  
 We shall not do what we ought not to do.  
 Bad words we shall not utter.  
 We shall give alms and live unto Him.

*Tr. Miss Abraham and J. S. Masilāmaṇi.*

## XLIV. THE NAME RĀDHĀ KṚISHṆA

MĪRĀ BĀĪ

GUJARĀTĪ

Utter not, utter not, utter not any word but Rādhā<sup>1</sup>  
 Kṛishṇa.  
 Do not forsake the sweet taste of sugar and sugar cane  
     and mix it with the bitter lime.  
 Do not forsake the light of the moon and the sun and  
     set your affection on a glow-worm.  
 Do not give up diamonds, rubies and jewels, nor weigh  
     real gems against pewter.  
 Mīrān says, "The Lord who holds up the mountain has  
     given you an equipoised body."

*Tr. Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Ramanbai M. Nilkanth.*

XLV. ALAGAR<sup>2</sup>

ĀṆḌĀL

TAMIL

Is it not true that black birds in innumerable flight  
     wake up the dawn, sing the praises of the God and  
     greet the coming of the sun?

<sup>1</sup> Rādhā is Kṛishṇa's mistress in the early legends; his consort in the later sects.

<sup>2</sup> A form of Kṛishṇa believed to haunt the hills to the north-west of Madura.

They sing the words of the great God whose bed is the banyan leaf and who lives in the forest-clad hills.

*Trs. Miss Abraham and J. S. Masilāmaṇi.*

XLVI. RELEASE FROM SIN

ĀṆḌĀL

TAMIL

What happens when we throw holy flowers on the god,  
and worship and sing to him with our lips and  
meditate on him, this Viṣṇu the son who comes  
from Vadamadura,<sup>1</sup>

The one who lives where the great and holy Jumna  
flows,

The beautiful light that sprang from the tribe of  
shepherds,

The one who made his mother happy ?

The sins that we committed in the past, and those that  
still wait to assail us,

All become like dust in the fire.

*Tr. Miss Abraham and J. S. Masilāmaṇi.*

XLVII. GOVIND IS MY LIFE

\*MĪRĀ BĀĪ

GUJARĀTĪ

Govind is my life ; the world tastes bitter to me.  
I love Rāma<sup>2</sup> and Rāma alone ; let my eyes see no other.  
In Mīrān's palace dwell Hari's saints ; Hari dwells far  
from intrigue with his saints.

*Tr. Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Ramanbai M. Nilkanth.*

XLVIII. YE SHALL EAT OF THE FAT OF THE LAND

ĀṆḌĀL

TAMIL

If we bathe and garland our god and sing unto the name  
of this righteous god regularly,

There shall be no bad days in the land ;

There shall be rain,—three showers a month.

<sup>1</sup> Vadamadura, "the northern Madura," as Mathurā (colloquially Muttra) is called in South India.

<sup>2</sup> In Mīrā Bāī's poems Kṛiṣṇa is often identified with Rāma.

Rice fields will be rich and swarm with fish.  
 Blossoms will be filled with honey and attract all kinds  
 of insects.  
 Cows will be fat and big and give pots and pots of milk.  
 Thus the country will enjoy increasing riches.

*Tr. Miss Abraham and J. S. Mas'lāmaṇi.*

### XLIX. THE JEWELS OF THE SAINT

MĪRĀ BĀĪ

GUJARĀTĪ

I, a woman, have a vast estate; true jewels are my  
 portion.<sup>1</sup>  
 I fashion my nose-ring of Viṭṭhal<sup>2</sup> and the wreath of  
 Hari is on my heart.  
 My thoughts are a string of pearls and my bangles are  
 Vishṇu. Why should I go to the goldsmith?  
 My fetters are of the Lord of Life, Kṛishṇa my gold  
 and silver anklets.  
 My silver ornaments are Rāma and Nārāyan; my *anvat*<sup>3</sup>  
 is the one who discerns the heart.  
 Let me make Purushottam my casket; Trikam the  
 name of the padlock.  
 Let me make the key of compassion and joy, and in it  
 keep my jewels.

*Tr. Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Ramanbhai M. Nilkanth.*

### L. WILT THOU NOT COME UNTO ME?<sup>4</sup>

ĀṆḌĀL

TAMIL

I garland thee with holy flowers and bow at thy feet  
 and worship and praise thee thrice a day.

<sup>1</sup> Much Kṛishṇaite poetry seeks to find helpful religious symbols in common things.

<sup>2</sup> All the names in these lines are names applied to Kṛishṇa.

<sup>3</sup> *Anvat* is "a ring furnished with silver balls, worn on the great toe."

<sup>4</sup> The sequence of poems from this point belong to the class in which the longing of the soul for Kṛishṇa is represented under the symbol of the wife separated from her husband, or the mistress from her lover. Frequently, the verses are full of religious feeling; sometimes they seem to be almost altogether erotic.

If thou wilt not see that I live with and serve without  
 blemish the god who slept on the sea of milk,  
 I shall weep and mourn and thou wilt find it hard to  
 comfort me.  
 My suffering will be like that of the ox that is unyoked  
 from its team and refuses to eat anything and pines  
 away because of the separation.

*Tr. Miss Abraham and J. S. Masilāmaṇi.*

# LI. THE BELOVED

MĪRĀ BĀĪ

HINDĪ

I am fascinated by the beauty of Mohan :<sup>1</sup>  
 In the bazar and by the way he teases me.  
 I have not learned the sweet desire of my beloved.

His body is beautiful and his eyes are like lotus flowers.  
 His glance is very pleasing, and his smile is very sweet.  
 Near the bank of the river Jumna he is grazing the cows,  
 And sings a sweet song to the flute.

I surrender myself, body and soul and wealth, to the  
 Mountain-holder.<sup>2</sup>  
 Mirā clasps his lotus feet.

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

# LII. WILT THOU LEAVE ME?

ĀṆḌĀL

TAMIL

Dost thou enter into the house and come to the inner  
 courtyard where we have come to play? Dost thou  
 show thyself and smile at us and break our hearts as  
 well as our houses?<sup>3</sup> O Govind,<sup>4</sup> thou didst once  
 measure the whole earth with one step and heaven with

<sup>1</sup> A name of Kṛishṇa.

<sup>2</sup> Kṛishṇa is said to have held up Mount Govardhan above the  
 people of Braj to save them from a deluge.

<sup>3</sup> When girls in South India build houses of sand, boys often  
 come and break them down.

<sup>4</sup> Govind, *i.e.* Kṛishṇa, is an incarnation of Viṣṇu, who  
 measured the earth with one stride and heaven with another.

another. If the love thou hast for me should change,  
or if we were to quarrel, what would people say who  
have seen us together?

*Tr. Miss Abraham and J. S. Masilāmaṇi.*

### LIII. SEPARATION

MĪRĀ BĀI

HINDĪ

The clouds, driven to and fro, have come,  
But they have not brought any news of Hari.  
The frog, the peacock and the sparrow hawk utter their  
cries,  
And the cuckoo calls aloud.  
In the black darkness the lightning is flashing,  
And terrifies the women whose husbands are away.

The pleasant wind produces a sound like music,  
And the rain is streaming down continually.  
The coil of separation is like that of the cobra with its  
hissing sound,  
But Mīrā's heart is set on Hari.

. . . . .  
For lack of the vision of him my eyes are aching.

Ah, my Lord, ever since thou hast been separated from  
me my heart has found no rest.

Hearing thy voice, my heart begins to tremble.  
Thy words are very sweet to me.

My eyes are fixed on the way of thy coming.  
One night seems to me like six months.

O my companions, to whom shall I tell the pain of  
separation?  
The whole night is passed by Mīrā in restlessness.

O my Lord, when shall I find thee,  
So that thou mayst remove my pain and give me happi-  
ness?

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

LIV. THE RESTLESSNESS OF LOVE

MĪRĀ BĀĪ

HINDĪ

I am true to my lord.

O my companions, there is nothing to be ashamed of  
now,

Since I have been seen dancing openly.

In the day I have no hunger.

I am always restless and sleep does not come in the  
night.

Leaving troubles behind, I shall go to the other side,  
Because hidden knowledge has taken hold of me.

All my relations have come and surrounded me like  
bees.

But Mīrā is the servant of her beloved, the Mountain-  
holder.

And she cares not though the people mock her.

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

LV. HE HAS MADE ME SUFFER

ĀṆḌĀL

TAMIL

O cuckoo, who singest merrily, playing with thy beak in  
the Shenbaka flowers, laden with honey,

The god, who holds a white conch in his left hand, has  
not shown his form to me, but has entered into my  
heart and has made me suffer sorely.

Wilt thou sing, but not too loudly, so that he may come  
to me ?

*Tr. Miss Abraham and J. S. Masilāmaṇi.*

LVI. LONELINESS

MĪRĀ BĀĪ

HINDĪ

Apart from Rāma, sleep does not come to me.

Through the sufferings of separation no sleep comes,  
And the fire of love is kindled.

Without the light of my beloved, the temple is dark ;  
The lamp does not please me.

Apart from my beloved, I feel very lonely ;  
 The night is passed in waking.  
 When will my beloved come home ?

The frog, the peacock and the sparrow hawk utter their  
 cries,  
 And the cuckoo calls aloud.  
 The clouds gather together,  
 And the flash of the lightning terrifies me.  
 My eyes are burning to see him.

O, my companions, what shall I do and where shall I go ?  
 The pain of my heart is in no wise removed.  
 The pang of separation has stung me like a cobra.  
 My life ebbs away like a wave.  
 Prepare the herb and bring it to me.

Who will bring my beloved back to me, O, my  
 companions ?  
 O, my lord, when wilt thou come to see Mīrā ?  
 Thou art pleasing to my heart.  
 When wilt thou come and talk and laugh with me ?

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

#### LVII. THE HOLY MAN AND THE LITTLE LAD<sup>1</sup>

KUṬṬIKKUṆṆU 'TAṆKACCHI

MALAYĀLAM

Now, in days of yore, a *sannyāsī* called Divākara,<sup>2</sup>  
 Foremost among the devotees of Viṣṇu's feet,  
 Free from the filth (of sin), a Yogī, very pure in spirit,  
 Set up within himself the Kṛishṇa form of Viṣṇu  
 And passed his days worshipping him with *bhakti*  
 every day,  
 Constantly renouncing attachment to other objects.  
 To him, twice-born, who worshipped in his heart  
 The eternal Lord of all the world,

<sup>1</sup> Kṛishṇa's boyhood at Gokul holds a large place in the early stories and in the worship.

<sup>2</sup> A Brāhman *sannyāsī*, ascetic, belonging to Travancore, who was a devotee of Kṛishṇa.

By his great, good fortune the Lord manifested himself  
visibly,  
In the lovely likeness of a little lad.  
While the Yogī walked, or when he went to bed,  
Or took his bath, or repeated the names of God,  
Or devoutly bowed his head in worship, or sat in  
contemplation,  
Or thought of the likeness, or took his food,  
The lad sported charmingly,  
Always outside him and inside as well,  
Singing songs sweetly and dancing  
Before him, to his intense joy.  
Thus the great Swāmīyar<sup>1</sup> of the Bilvamaṅgala clan<sup>2</sup>  
Lived in blessedness and joy,  
Looking with delight at the picturesque form divine  
Of the heaven-born lad who never parted from him.  
One day the Yogī Divākara sat down to sing hymns  
from the Devārām,<sup>3</sup>  
All alone ; and, while he was doing *pāja*,<sup>4</sup>  
The changeless God of gods, Absolute Bliss, the friend  
of devotees,  
The lotus-eyed little son of Vasudeva,  
Gathered up the flowers with his hands and scattered  
them on the floor,  
Worshipped the great Brāhman in mockery,  
Stole and hid the idols  
Which the holy man was worshipping,  
Seized and threw away his vessels one by one,  
Mounted his back and played the *mahout*.  
At these, the Lord's mischievous deeds,  
There arose in the heart of the blessed Swāmīyar  
Great joy, and, along with it,  
In spite of himself, a little resentment ;  
And the Brāhman, though his heart was free from evil  
intent,

<sup>1</sup> Swāmīyar, a vernacular form of Svāmī, "Lord," a title bestowed on honoured ascetics.

<sup>2</sup> The Bilvamaṅgalas are one of the most famous clans of the Nambūtiri Brāhmins of Travancore.

<sup>3</sup> The canon of Tamil hymns in praise of Śiva. <sup>4</sup> *I.e.* worship.



Forbade the Lord with a movement of his hand.  
 What man indeed is there, even among sages,  
 Who has not been involved in the darkness of anger ?  
 Notwithstanding the Yogī's *bhakti*, at this his act,  
 Viṣṇu in the lad's form feigned anger and said,  
 " If you want to see me any more,  
 Cast away all unbelief from your mind and to Ananta's  
 forest  
 Come. There in an instant I shall reveal myself to you."  
 With these words Viṣṇu disappeared.  
 When, like a jewel-lamp blown out before one's eyes  
 By a mighty wind,—  
 When, like resplendent lightning, instantly disappeared  
 That lovely lad of the lotus eyes,  
 The *sannyāsī* was sorry : who can tell his grief ?—  
 What can indeed be said of the Lord's sportive deeds ?  
 Like a picture in colours on canvas  
 Stood the *sannyāsī* in dejected mood. . . .  
 " O, my Viṣṇu, enough of these sports, enough !  
 Manifest thyself before me, O Lord.  
 Although I have wronged thee a little,  
 Forgive me and deign to save me."  
 Thus the great Yogī (after coming to Ananta's forest)  
 to the wish-granting Lord  
 Prayed. And as he stood in all eagerness,  
 There was heard close by the mingled, jingling sound  
 Of bracelets, little bells and anklets.  
 Instantly the Yogī's curiosity was aroused  
 And he stood bewildered.  
 Then to his joy there appeared before him  
 The little lad, absorbed in play.  
 The Yogī, seeing the little fellow,  
 Was overjoyed in his heart,  
 As a peacock at the sight of a dark cloud,  
 And drew near in all eagerness  
 To take him up tenderly and embrace him.  
 But on the instant Lakshmī's blessed lord  
 Fled swiftly from the place.

LVIII. A TRANCE<sup>1</sup>

MĀDHABĪ

BENGALĪ

From Nilachal,<sup>2</sup> to see Gaur's<sup>3</sup> mother Sachī,  
Has come the paṇḍit, Jagadānanda named ;  
And, from a knoll, on Nuddea his eyes are fixed,  
As it were Gokul, Kṛishṇa's birthplace.  
" I may—I may not—see her once again " :  
So, struck with fear, his anxious glance  
Perceives, on all sides, trees and creepers green  
Shedding their leaves untimely, the glowing sun  
His rays upshrouding, and the milk-white clouds  
Changing to rusty ; birds with closed eyes,  
Careless of flower and berry and sparkling stream,  
Sit loud lamenting, shrieking to the skies,  
Calling, in sympathy, Gaurāṅga's name ;  
While by the wayside dumb the cattle stand,  
Herd after herd ; and Mādh'bī's paṇḍit fell  
Full-length upon the ground.

*Tr. J. N. C. Ganguly.*

GNOMIC VERSES

LIX. THE VANITY OF GOOD REPUTE

LAL DED

KĀSHMĪRĪ

Integrity and high repute are but water carried in a basket.

If some mighty man can grasp the wind within his fist,  
Or if he can tether an elephant with a hair of his head,  
Only if one be skilled in such feats as these will he be  
successful (in retaining integrity and high repute).

*Tr. Grierson and Barnett.*

<sup>1</sup> Chaitanya and his followers practised trances. Hence a sudden access of emotion might readily induce the condition.

<sup>2</sup> Nilachal, "The blue hill," is the site of the temple of Jagannāth at Purī.

<sup>3</sup> Chaitanya (1485-1533), also called Gaur and Gaurāṅga, the Bengali Krishnaitic leader, who was held by his followers to be an incarnation of Kṛishṇa, took ascetic vows, and thereafter spent most of his time at Purī. His mother Sachī was now old. Since his vows kept him from visiting his birthplace, Nuddea, where his mother still lived, he sent his disciple Jagadānanda to ask for her.

## LX. THE WORTH OF VIRTUE

AVVAI

TAMIL

If the virtuous are ruined, the virtuous are still virtuous ;  
 If the wicked are ruined, of what use are they ?  
 If the golden pot is broken, it is still gold ;  
 If the earthen pot is broken, of what use will it be ?

*Tr. V. S. Dornakal.*

## LXI. OUR TYRANT BODY

AVVAI

TAMIL

We slave, we beg, we cross the seas ;  
 We revere, we rule, we compose, our songs we raise,  
 All to feed this wretched body of ours,  
 Which tortures us for a measure of rice !

*Tr. V. S. Dornakal.*

## LXII. FRUITLESS TOIL

AVVAI

TAMIL

Ye that toil hard to seek riches, foolish men !  
 And bury it under earth to save it from harm, listen !  
 When your spirit flies away from its cage at last,  
 Who will enjoy all this vast wealth of yours ?

*Tr. Miss Abraham and J. S. Masilāmaṇi.*

## LXIII. EVERY ROSE HAS ITS THORN

MAHADEVIAKKA

KANARESE

If you build your house on a hill, how can you fear  
 wild beasts ? If you build it by the sea, how can you  
 fear the waves ? If you build it in the *pettah*,<sup>1</sup> how can

<sup>1</sup> The *pettah*, the village.

you fear noise? In this world we must bear praise and blame equally, without anger and with patient mind.

*Tr. Miss Butler and Mrs. Dasappa.*

# LXIV. A LOW ESTIMATE OF WOMEN

GAṄGĀDEVĪ

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT

Shady places where all evil blossoms; snares that trap, as a deer is trapped, minds blinded with passion; weapons wielded by the deceiving emissaries of Desire:—how can the wise have confidence in women?

*Tr. M. Krishnamachariar.*

# LXV. THE VALUE OF WOMAN

HONNAMMA

KANARESE

The mother who brought them forth (blind fools!), is she not a woman? And is not the person who reared them a woman? Alas! Why do short-sighted fools pour forth ridicule, crying, "Woman, Woman"?

What boots it if the child be a son, and what loss if she be a daughter? Happiness, worldly or other-worldly, is conferred by that individual who prospers, son or daughter, it matters not.

The master's heir is no blessing to the family unless he be well-bred and well-behaved too. The daughter who goes forth from one honourable family to another, posterity will call her blessed.

*Tr. Miss Butler and Mrs. Dasappa.*

# LXVI. IN PRAISE OF A GOOD WIFE

AVVAI

•

TAMIL

A home wants nothing when it has a good wife.  
If such a woman is not found in the house,  
Or if she is a woman who uses hard words,  
The house is like a den where a tiger dwells.

*Tr. Miss Abraham and J. S. Masilāmaṇi.*

LXVII. LITTLE PADMANĪ<sup>1</sup>

ŚRĪNGARĀMMA

KANARESE

Her hands and feet were like the lotus, her eyes and her face like the lotus petal. So she was called Padmanī.

She clapped her little hands, she toddled about. People, hearing the sweet words of the chubby child, adored her. She and her friends chattered like parrots, and they walked in stately style like swans or strutted like peacocks, the sweet, inquisitive, little folks.

*Tr. Miss Butler and Mrs. Dasappa.*

## LOVE AND BEAUTY

LXVIII. BALLAD OF THE DEATH OF CHAṆḌIDĀS<sup>2</sup>

RĀMĪ

BENGALI

Where hast thou gone, friend Chaṇḍidās?—  
My thirsty eyes are never slaked,  
Like rain-birds when the clouds are dry.

What did the king, the Lord of Gaur?—  
His love-unlighted life is vain!—  
He killed the darling of my heart.

Why didst thou go to court to sing?—  
Love's pride is shattered in the dust,  
Before heaven, earth, hell, beast and man.

<sup>1</sup> From the *Padmanikalyāṇa*, the marriage of Śrīnivāsa and Padmanī.

<sup>2</sup> Chaṇḍidās, a famous Bengali poet of the early decades of the fifteenth century, was, by tradition, a worshipper of the goddess, as his name implies; and he inherited from his father the position of priest of the goddess Bāśulī (Sanskrit *Viśālākṣhī*, "with wide-open eyes") in his birthplace, Nannur, in the Birtāum district; but all his poems are Vaiṣṇava and in praise of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Though a Brāhman, his mistress was a washerman's daughter named Rāmī. He was therefore outcasted. Finally, he visited Gaur, the capital of Bengal, which was then under a Muhammadan dynasty, and was put to death by the king, as narrated in the poem. The ballad is by Rāmī, and is in very rough, early Bengali. Selections, which tell the whole story, are here translated.

She heard the song, the Padshah's Queen ;  
Her secret pain she could not hide,  
But told her Lord her inmost heart,

" My soul within is all aflame  
With burning love for Chaṇḍidās. "—  
For love she sacrificed her all !

The king calls up his minister :  
" Quick, bring the stoutest elephant,  
And give the bard his guerdon due !

Upon the great brute's burly back  
~~With~~ stout ropes bind our cursed foe ;  
Transfix him and get rid of him ! "

The Queen cried, " Listen, O my Lord,  
He is the embodiment of Love :  
Why then destroy his mortal frame ?

He whose sweet song has pierced my heart  
Is not a man of common clay :  
Within him Love eternal reigns ! "

Away the beast rushed furiously !  
And seeing thee, my love, no more,  
Heaven's bolt fell crashing on my head !

Hard holding by the creeper's stem,  
" Lord of my heart, " I cried aloud,  
" Left am I lordless and alone ! "

The Queen cried loudly, " Leave me not " ;  
And even then her spirit fled ;  
And those two lives did meet in death.

With thoughts fixed deep on Chaṇḍidās,  
The Queen no longer clung to life,  
And death brought ease to her distress.

Struck with the sight, then Rāmī ran,  
And, at the royal lady's feet  
The washer-maiden swooning fell.

*Tr. J. N. C. Ganguly.*

## LXIX. LOVE MYSTERIES

PRINCESS ZEB-UN-NISSA

PERSIAN

Though I am like Laila,<sup>1</sup> yet my heart loves like Majnun.<sup>1</sup> I wish to keep my head towards the desert, but modesty chains my feet down.

The nightingale came to sit in the company of the flower in the garden, because she was my pupil. I am an expert in love matters:—even the moth is our pupil.

*Tr. Barakat Ullah.*

## LXX. LOVE MISERIES

ŚILĀ

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT

Now that I am forlorn of my beloved, Anxiety<sup>2</sup> has got into my heart; and, because of my brooding thereon, Sleep<sup>2</sup> has deserted me: with the disloyal who will abide?

*Tr. M. Krishnamachariar.*

## LXXI. THE LONELY WIFE

ĀNANDAMAYĪ

BENGALI

Come and see with your own eyes—your Sunetra now wears no jewels; she is all undecked, her cheeks pale, her hair wild and dishevelled. My dear Lord, do come home and see her miserable plight!

Bemoaning this dreadful separation, my mind has lost its grip, but my eyes are not upon your path. O, I think I must follow you as an ascetic wherever you may be; for I can no longer bear the consuming fire of your absence.

This body, often perfumed with your own hands with powdered kumkum, I besmear with ashes for your sake

<sup>1</sup> Laila is the lady and Majnun the lover in the most famous of Persian romances.

<sup>2</sup> In the Sanskrit, *chintā* (anxiety) and *nidrā* (sleep), being both feminine, readily take on personality. Since the lover has allowed Chintā to take the place of his beloved, Nidrā has left him in disgust.

alone, and these flowing tresses, so lovingly and so often caressed by you, I twist up in the matted coil of an ascetic. My breast, on which your head used to rest, I beat with my hands wildly as if to break it.

The bracelets you gave me—precious tokens of your love—I shall have made into an ascetic's ear-rings ; and the plate you used to eat from shall serve me to receive alms from door to door. O how I long to leave this land! I should wander, a religious beggar, calling "Hari, Hari"; but my mother and my youth (that treasure you left in trust with me, which I might so easily lose) forbid me. So I must keep in hiding and appear poor and destitute.

*Tr. J. N. C. Ganguly.*

## LXXII. THE UNSEEN BELOVED

SULTAN RAZIYYĀ BEGAM

PERSIAN

Without seeing thy face we have given thee a place in our own eye, like the pupil.

I have only heard thy name and I love thee. I have not seen thee, and yet I love thee as if I had seen and known thee.

The light of the face of the sun is tossing about (is glancing to and fro). Why? Because it has been wounded by the sword of our angry eye.

Beware, O Shiring.<sup>1</sup> Be not forward in treading the path of love. Have you never heard what befell Farhad?<sup>2</sup>

*Tr. Barakat Ullah.*

## LXXIII. A LOVE DIALOGUE

SHEKH RANGREZIN

HINDĪ

*Ālam speaks :*

The bright eyes of a beautiful woman, awake all night long, are full of love.

<sup>1</sup> Shiring is a pet name used for Shirin.

<sup>2</sup> Farhad is the hero and Shirin is the heroine of *Farhad and Shirin*, a Persian Romance written by Urfi in the sixteenth century.



It seems, as one looks at her, that youth is flowing  
from her.

Those eyes are moving to and fro, intoxicated with love.  
They are cast down, being heavy with sleep, and  
sometimes they are wide open.

O Ālam, some new beauty is seen in these eyes.

They appear like a bee hovering over a lotus flower.

*Shekh Rangrezin replies:*

Those eyes that are like a bee want to fly away,  
when they behold the face of the moon.

But knowing that it is night, they remain in the lotus  
flower.

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

#### LXXIV. LOVE'S FULNESS

THE EMPRESS NUR JAHAN

PERSIAN

Thy love has melted my body and it has become  
water. Any antimony that might have remained be-  
came the antimony of the bubble's eyes.

The bud may open by the morning breeze which  
blows in the garden, but the key to the lock of my heart  
is the smile of my beloved.

*Tr. Barakat Ullah.*

#### LXXV. LOVE'S CERTAINTY

RŪPAMATĪ<sup>1</sup>

HINDĪ

Friend! let others boast their treasure;  
Mine's a stock of true love's pleasure,  
Safely cared for, every part,  
'Neath that trusty lock, my heart;  
Safe from other women's peeping;  
For the key's in mine own keeping.  
Day by day it grows a little,  
Never loses e'en a tittle;  
But through life will ever go,  
With Bāz Bahādur, weal or woe.

*Tr. Major-Gen. Cunningham.*

<sup>1</sup> See Frontispiece, and page 30.

LXXVI. THE SINGER'S OWN BEAUTY

PRINCESS ZEB-UN-NISSA

PERSIAN

When from my cheek I lift my veil,  
The roses turn with envy pale,  
And from their pierced hearts, rich with pain,  
Send forth their fragrance like a wail.

Or if perchance one perfumed tress  
Be lowered to the wind's caress,  
The honeyed hyacinths complain,  
And languish in a sweet distress.

And, when I pause, still groves among,  
(Such loveliness is mine) a throng  
Of nightingales awake and strain  
Their souls into a quivering song.

*Tr. Mrs. Sarojinī Naidu.*

LXXVII. CONSCIOUS AUTUMN

GĀṄĀDEVĪ

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT

With eyes like full-blown lotuses, eager to behold  
her own countenance, verily did Autumn draw out of  
her bodice of clouds the mirror of the sun.

*Tr. M. Krishnamachariar.*

LXXVIII. THE TORMENTING BEE<sup>1</sup>

VIKAṬANITAMBĀ

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT

Divert now your rambling mind, O bee, to other  
flowering shrubs such as can bear your pressure. Why  
do you, for no end, and thus unseasonably, torment the  
double jasmine's sprouting bud, in which as yet no  
pollen has been formed?

*Tr. M. Krishnamachariar.*

<sup>1</sup> Often used as a symbol for the torments of love.

## LXXIX. BEAUTY'S ADORNMENT

PRINCESS ZEB-UN-NISSA

PERSIAN

I am the daughter of an emperor, yet I have set my face towards poverty. This is what adorns my beauty, and my name is Zeb-un-Nissa (the adorning of women).

*Tr. Barakat Ullah.*

## LXXX. THE HEART'S BITTERNESS

NAWWAB BAHU BEGAM

URDU

To whom shall I go  
To tell the complaints of my heart?—  
The heart's judgement is within itself;  
But its blister has burst,  
And has flowed out through the eyes;  
Its caravan is passing  
By the pathway of tears.

*Tr. M. Hedayet Hosain.*

## LXXXI. JOY AND SORROW

THE EMPRESS NUR JAHAN

PERSIAN

The crescent of Id has at last appeared in the face of the heavens. The key of the wine-shop had been lost, and at last it has been found.

My eyes have no other work but to shed tears—  
Yes, what other work can people without hands and feet do?

*Tr. Barakat Ullah.*

## LXXXII. A CONFESSION

SHIRIN

PERSIAN

Do not count me among good people. I know what I am. Do not entertain good thoughts of me. I am a prisoner of my treacherous passions and am full of sin. This is no lie. I know what I am.

I do not tread the path of pride. I repeat this to myself again and again. I am bad and my actions are evil and I know what I am.

If people praise me, O Shirin, I am not transported with joy. Hidden from all eyes, alone by myself, I know what I am.

*Tr. Barakat Ullah.*

LXXXIII. EPITAPH

THE EMPRESS NUR JAHAN

PERSIAN

On the tomb of us poor people there will be neither a light nor a flower, nor the wings of a moth, nor the voice of a nightingale.

*Tr. Barakat Ullah.*

LXXXIV. EPITAPH

PRINCESS ZINAT-UN-NISSA

PERSIAN

In my grave the grace of God is my only help. It is enough if the shadow of the cloud of mercy covers my tomb.

*Tr. Barakat Ullah.*

## IV

### MODERN INDIA

#### ON MAN, ON NATURE, AND ON HUMAN LIFE

##### LXXXV. IN LIFE'S MARKET

DHARENDRABĀLĀ SINGH

BENGALI

The rains have filled the marshlands, yet the rice has not been cut ; capital and interest, all are lost ; only my life remains. All men, one by one, cut their rice in time, filled their barns and so gladdened their hearts. But I, luckless one, I alone was always about to cut my rice, yet remained sitting idle ; and oh, Hari ! the rice was not cut. In life's early spring, alas ! I spent my days in play ; in spring I devoted myself to the service of pleasure. Thus in vanity I have passed so long a time, and to-day in life's rains I possess nothing at all. Into this great market, the world, the moneylender sent me, giving me capital, in order that I might gain some profit ; now life's rains have devoured all my rice ; and far from gaining aught, I am near to losing my capital. The moneylender is harsh—how shall I explain to him ? Excessive rains have ruined me, alack ! A merchant am I ; coming into this market of the world, I have lost both capital and interest, and I go to my own land. I know not with what face I can appear before the moneylender ; I know not what Fate has written on my brow.<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

<sup>1</sup> From the *Asrukana*.

## LXXXVI. THE OCEAN

NIRUPAMĀ DEBĪ

BENGALI

O thou ever changing, O restless, O ever distraught, stretching out a hundred arms, dashing and breaking, what seekest thou, unsatisfied? What wealth hast thou lost that thou dost search after, while thy untr tranquil breast rises and falls, breaks asunder and gathers together?

The little earth of clay rolls at thy feet, yet, O furious one, thine anger foaming swells! Lured by what flute has Bāsuki risen from the under-world? Obedient to what magic spell does that mad one roll on in dance, rush and break?

Free from all bounds, intoxicated, royally generous, O thou ever free! Thou wert ever renowned in the song of poets from the beginning. Wast thou the primal speech, the first-born utterance, in the world of poetry, of the World-Poet? Pulsing with restless life, unceasing sounds the rain of thy mighty utterance.

In the world of the world's Lord art thou the great force that brings to nought? When one looks upon thee, as waves break, so devotion breaks in the heart. Deep, deep sounding throbs thy drum by day and night. Thousands of pilgrims come hasting to hear that sound.

Ah! at the embrace of thy wide arms they forget differences of caste, and kiss with great happiness and joy. Lo! thy love is world-wide; thou art love-drunken. Dost thou give to mankind thy example to mingle with great love?

Well-shapen is thy youthful form, restless thy heart. The end of thy dark blue *sārī*<sup>1</sup> gleams with a border of white foam. Vishnu and Lakshmi with mirth hold festival in thy jewelled palace. The joy of the festival overflows and fills thy body.

O ever new, ever unquiet, thy wanton gestures drag me also near and make me partner in thy dance. Cover my gloom with the stainless foam that my pain-wearied heart may enjoy the peace of heaven.

<sup>1</sup> An Indian lady's robe.

O dear one, O great friend, O thou who art ever my friend, let me paint thy picture, fair and full of colour. I will weave into two verses the happiness of two days; and they, till the hour of my death, will bring to my heart great joy of the Everlasting.

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

### LXXXVII. BASANTA PAÑCHAMÍ<sup>1</sup>

PAÑKAJINĪ BASU

BENGALI

To-day, after a year, on the sacred fifth day, Nature has flung away her worn raiment, and with new jewels, see, with fresh buds and new shoots she has begemmed herself and smiles. The birds wing their way, singing with joy; ah, how lovely! The black bee hums as if, with sound of "Ulu! ulu!" he wished good fortune to Nature. The south breeze seems to say as it flits from house to house, "To-day Bīṇāpāṇī<sup>2</sup> comes here to Bengal." Arrayed in guise that would enrapture even sages, maid Nature has come to worship thy feet, O propitious one! See, O India, at this time all pay no heed to fear of plague, famine, earthquake; all put away pain and grief and gloom; to-day all are drunk with pleasure. For a year Nature was waiting in hope for this day to come. Many folk in many a fashion now summon thee, O white-armed one; I also have a mind to worship. Thy two feet are red lotuses; but, say, with what gift shall we worship thee, O mother Bīṇāpāṇī? Ever sorrowful, ever ill-starred are we women of Bengal, all of us. Yet if thou have mercy, this utterly dependent one will worship thee with the gift of a single tear of devotion shed on thy lotus feet. Graciously accept that, and in mercy, O white-armed one, grant this blessing on my head on this propitious,

<sup>1</sup> "Spring fifth" is the fifth day of the light fortnight of the month of Māgh, when Sarasvatī, the goddess of letters and wisdom, who loves the *Vīṇā*, lute, is worshipped. The month of Māgh corresponds to January-February.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* the goddess who carries the *Vīṇā*, or lute, in her hand.

sacred day, that this life may be spent in thy worship,  
Mother.

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

LXXXVIII. THE DANCER

NIRUPAMĀ DEBĪ

BENGALI

Lo! the heavy rain has come! With loosened tresses  
densely dark, lo! the sky is covered. Lightnings rend  
the thick darkness over the mountains. All around, to  
my heart's content, I see that beauty has burst forth.

See, frolicsome, she pours forth her loveliness in a  
thousand streams! Her raiment, hastily flung around  
her in disarray, mad passion in her eyes, with the voice  
of the *pāpiya*, full of sweetness and pity, she sings.

Slowly move her feet. Slipping, slipping, falls her  
loosely hanging scarf. Her heart throbs with tumultuous  
feeling. As if a flood of beauty overflows, her green  
jacket of emerald grass displays the hue of her radiant  
beauty all around.

The anklets on her feet, keeping time, ring out in  
swift succession, as if they were sweet cymbals. Round  
her lovely throat hangs her chain of emerald parrots.  
The rain has ceased and she garbs herself in silken  
robes brodered with diamond raindrops.

She gladdens the eye. On the treetops birds play  
on golden tambourines. Is the dancer dancing in  
Indra's hall, casting restless glances here and there?  
Urbaśī<sup>1</sup> puts off the chain of jewels from her breast.

How gay her laughter. How fair a dance her  
tinkling footsteps weave. Her bracelets and bangles  
circle glittering. She is girdled with melody of mur-  
muring swans. For her earth and sky swoon away,  
overflowing with love.

Her hands touched the *bīṇā*<sup>2</sup> and by her spell enthral-  
led my infatuated heart. Tears stream from my eyes;  
infatuation floods my heart. The witch to-day has  
melted my timid heart. Lo! the heavy rain has come.

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*



## LXXXIX. PALANQUIN BEARERS

SAROJINĪ NAIDU

ENGLISH

Lightly, O lightly we bear her along,  
 She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;  
 She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,  
 Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,  
 We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Softly, O softly we bear her along,  
 She hangs like a star in the dew of our song;  
 She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,  
 She falls like a tear from the eye of a bride.  
 Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing,  
 We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

XC. THE DEVOTEE<sup>1</sup>

MĀNKUMĀRĪ

BENGALI

I seek the lofty heart of the great. Give me not treasure of pearls and jewels, O God. I desire not dominion in this world, nor honour. If I gain the heart I desire, I will pour out my life, worthless though it be, and will beg manhood, the greatest thing of all. I worship a heart, a heart worthy of worship.

I seek a heart simple as a little child's. His lips are filled with guilelessness. Artless are his words. He knows not how to humour men with various devices. Open is his heart, open his mind. Forgetful of self, his love wells up from his whole heart. I seek a simple and heavenly heart.

I seek a heart entrancing and beautiful, pure as the sun at dawn, soft as blossoms, sweet as the breeze of spring or the *papiya's* song; in joy like the autumn moon; profound as the fathomless sea; full as a lake that is filled to the brim in the rains. I seek a heart entrancing and beautiful.

I seek the loving heart of one who loves; who always loves others, and in the hope of others' happiness

<sup>1</sup> From *Kāvya Kushumāñjali*.

ever denies himself and gives himself. When he thinks of a sufferer tears stream from his eyes, and a tempest of love ever rushes through his heart. He feels all men his kin; the universe is his home; by giving himself he secures the welfare of the world.

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

### XCI. IN THE LIGHT

MRS. KĀMINĪ ROY

BENGALI

We are indeed children of Light. What an endless part goes on in the Light. In the Light is our sleeping and waking, the play of our life and death.

Beneath one great canopy, in the ray of one great sun, slowly, very slowly, burn the unnumbered lamps of life.

In the midst of this unending Light I lose myself; amidst this intolerable radiance I wander like one blind.

We are indeed children of Light. Why then do we fear when we see the Light? Come, let us look all around and see, here no man hath cause for any fear.

In this boundless ocean of Light, if a tiny lamp goes out, let it go; who can say that it will not burn again?

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

### XCII. THE VISIBLE

PRIYAMBADĀ DEBĪ

BENGALI

Dearest, I know that thy body is but transitory; that the kindled life, thy shining eyes, shall be quenched by the touch of death, I know; that this thy body, the meeting-place of all beauty, in seeing which I count my life well-lived, shall become but a heap of bones, I know. Yet I love thy body. Day by day afresh through it have I satisfied a woman's love and desire by serving thy feet and worshipping thee. On days of good omen I have decked thee with a flower-garland; on days of woe I have wiped away with my *sari* end thy tears of grief. O my lord, I know that thy soul is with

the Everlasting One, yet waking suddenly some nights  
I have wept in loneliness, thinking how thou didst drive  
away my fear, clasping me to thy breast. And so I  
count thy body as the chief goal of my love, as very  
heaven.<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

### XCIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NIRUPAMĀ DEBĪ

BENGALI

Thee among all men do I honour ;  
Thee among all men do I know.  
Lo ! in the beauty of all thee do I see.

In the mouth of all I have heard, I have heard  
The sweet voice of thy lips.

Thee this time I have sought and found ;  
Thee amongst all do I worship ;  
Lo ! I for all have given my life.

To the work of all amongst all  
I have devoted my heart.<sup>2</sup>

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

### XCIV. REMEMBRANCE

PRİYAMBADĀ DEBĪ

BENGALI

To-day I shall not indulge in lovers' quarrels.  
I shall not open the ledger and calculate debit and credit.  
Only, once again, I shall fill my heart with remembrance  
of thee.<sup>3</sup>

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

### XCV. IMMORTALITY

PRİYAMBADĀ DEBĪ

BENGALI

The union which remains incomplete in life will be  
completed afterwards in the unknown world. That is

<sup>1</sup> From the *Patralekha*.                      From the *Kanyādhūp*.  
<sup>2</sup> From the *Patralekha*.

the hope with which I have made strong my heart ;  
and so, when the evening sun sets in utter stillness, I  
say to my heart, worn with grief of separation : "O  
grief-stricken, take courage. Yonder has passed a day  
without union. See, it has brought still one day  
nearer the meeting with my beloved."<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

### XCVI. A WOMAN'S BEAUTY

SRI SARASVATĪ DEVĪ

HINDĪ

Round the black eyes are eyebrows looking like a bow.  
They are not frightened at all, and they shoot their  
arrows with certainty.

Seeing the precious ear-rings with pearls and beautiful  
settings,

Even the moon with all the stars is filled with shame.  
I cannot describe the beauty of the lips, cheeks, teeth  
and nose,

Even Śesh Nāg,<sup>2</sup> seeing the beautiful hair, sighs  
deeply.

*Tr. Mrs. Keay.*

### XCVII. A LOVER'S FEAR

BAHU BEGAM

URDU

At night, when we met,  
I wished to gaze at her  
(She is envied even by the moon !);  
And then this fear arose,  
"Ah, she is delicate :  
She may be crushed  
By the burden of my adoring looks !"

*Tr. M. Hedayet Hosain.*

<sup>1</sup> From the *Patralekha*.

<sup>2</sup> The thousand-headed snake of heaven.

XCVIII. THE LIVING DOLL<sup>1</sup>

PAÑKAJINĪ BASU

BENGALI

Look, she is a living doll. As the fruit of a thousand births, as reward for a thousand austerities, she had favour on us at break of day and came. To welcome her the dawn maiden with swift hands made blossom and bud to flower; when they heard that she would come to earth, the sweet singing birds carolled welcome with dulcet voice; the morning breeze said softly to all men, "There comes to earth a flower from heaven."

Look, she is a living doll. Three months and six days ago she came to the dwelling of men; and even to-day she is weighed down with incessant sleep. She knows not day and night; tears, joy, love, laughter are all unknown; the maid is without consciousness, without error. Yet her own folk come running to her each moment like bees covetous of honey. When she bursts into laughter, all laugh too. What limitless power is in her little heart!

What a living doll she is! At the fragrance of her body all the world smiles; śephālikā and bakul flowers shower down abashed. In her baby babble what music pours forth; in all the world where is its like? When ṛishis<sup>1</sup> and sages see the moon of heaven shine upon her face, their hearts are moved within them.

Look, she is a living doll. All day long with fascinated, unblinking eyes, I look, yet the sting of unsatisfaction is within me. Love or joy she has taken away, poetry and memory too; she has snatched away my whole heart. Whenever I go anywhere, in a moment I come back and look. In truth she has made me a mechanical doll. Without her the world is empty; vice and virtue I forget. Blessed is thy power, and thy glory incomparable.

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

<sup>1</sup> See p. 15.

## XCIX. OUR CASUARINA TREE

TORU DUTT

ENGLISH

Like a huge Python, winding round and round  
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars  
Up to its very summit near the stars,  
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound  
No other tree could live. But gallantly  
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung  
In crimson clusters all the boughs among,  
Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee ;  
And oft at nights the garden overflows  
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,  
Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose.

When first my casement is wide open thrown  
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest ;  
Sometimes, and most in winter,—on its crest  
A grey baboon sits statue-like alone  
Watching the sunrise ; while on lower boughs  
His puny offspring leap about and play ;  
And far and near kokilas hail the day ;  
And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows ;  
And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast  
By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,  
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.

But not because of its magnificence  
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul ;  
Beneath it we have played ; though years may roll,  
O sweet companions, loved with love intense,  
For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear !  
Blent with your images, it shall arise  
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes !  
What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear  
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach ?  
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,  
That haply to the unknown land may reach.

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith !  
Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away

In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,  
 When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith,  
 And the waves gently kissed the classic shore  
 Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,  
 When earth lay tranced in a dreamless swoon ;  
 And every time the music rose,—before  
 Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,  
 Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime  
 I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay  
 Unto thy honour, Tree, beloved of those  
 Who now in blessed sleep, for aye, repose.  
 Dearer than life to me, alas ! were they !  
 Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done  
 With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale,  
 Under whose awful branches lingered pale  
 “ Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,  
 And Time the shadow ” ; and though weak the verse  
 That would thy beauty fain, oh fain rehearse,  
 May Love defend thee from Oblivion’s curse.

## C. SITA

TORU DUTT

ENGLISH

Three happy children in a darkened room !  
 What do they gaze on with wide-open eyes ?  
 A dense, dense forest, where no sunbeam pries,  
 And in its centre a cleared spot.—There bloom  
 Gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace  
 Tall trees ; there, in a quiet, lucid lake  
 The white swans glide ; there “ whirring from the  
 brake ”  
 The peacock springs ; there, herds of wild deer race ;  
 There patches gleam with yellow waving grain ;  
 There blue smoke from strange altars fises light,  
 There dwells in peace the poet-anchorite.  
 But who is this fair lady ? Not in vain  
 She weeps,—for lo ! at every tear she sheds,  
 Tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain,  
 And bowed in sorrow are the three young heads.

It is an old, old story, and the lay  
 Which has evoked sad Sita from the past  
 Is by a mother sung. . . . 'Tis hushed at last  
 And melts the picture from their sight away,  
 Yet shall they dream of it until the day!  
 When shall those children by their mother's side  
 Gather, ah me! as erst at eventide?

### CL. OPEN THOU THY DOOR OF MERCY

HEMANTABĀLĀ DUTT

BENGALI

All, my guilt of old, sin upon sin, put far, far away.  
 Give, O Lord, give in my heart the melody of a new  
 song.

To stir to life my withered, unfeeling heart, near to  
 death and poor, play thy melody on the *bīṇā*, taking  
 ever a new tune.

As in Nature thy sweetness overflows, so let thy  
 compassion wake in my heart.

In the midst of all things may thy loving face float  
 before my eyes. May no rebel thought against thy  
 wish ever wake in my heart.

Day by day, before I set foot in life's forest, may I  
 crave thy blessing and so advance, my Lord.

Setting thy commands upon my head, may I with  
 unfaltering care accomplish my every task in the  
 remembrance of thy feet.

Giving to thee the fruit of my task fulfilled, at the  
 end of day may my wearied spirit and body find rest.

Hurrying have I come from far away, knowing thee  
 compassionate. A hundred hindrances there were to  
 my coming. How many thorns fill the path to my  
 goal. So, to-day, behold! my heart is wounded, my  
 life is dark. Hurrying have I come from far away,  
 knowing thee compassionate.

Open thou thy door of mercy. My raft of life drifts  
 on the boundless ocean. Fearlessness art thou, and  
 ever powerful. Nought have I, I am weak and poor.  
 My heart is thirsting for thy lotus feet. The day is



now far spent. Open thou thy door of mercy. My raft of life drifts on the boundless ocean.<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

## CII. WILL YOU NOT LOOK BACK ? •

MRS. KĀMINĪ ROY

BENGALI

When they saw him on the road, many in scorn passed by on the other side ; some mocking pushed him with their foot and went their way ; others came near and poured out abuse, and having added pain to pain, departed.

What ! is there not in this world one sorrowing heart, a tear or two, for a human being fallen ? Him, fallen on the way and helpless, they trample underfoot and go by. Is there none to stretch out loving hands ?

It is true that his feet slipped by his own fault ; and so you will kick him on the head, and all will be deaf to the sound of his distress, each going his own way. Will you not look back ?

Lamp in hand, he went, not alone ; on the way the light went out, and so he fell ; will you not in mercy take his hand and raise him up ? Will you not pause for him one half moment, friends ?

Let him kindle his lamp from your own lights ; let him go forward holding your hands ; if you pass, leaving him in the mud in darkness, he will always remain plunged in the blackness of night.

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

## CIII. CALL AND BRING HER

MRS. KĀMINĪ ROY

BENGALI

She went on the wrong way ; she has come back again ; afar off she stands, her head bowed down with shame and fear ; she does not step forward, she cannot

<sup>1</sup> From the *Mādhavī*.

raise her eyes,—go near, take her hand, call her and bring her.

To-day turn not your face away in silent reproach ; to-day let eyes and words be filled with the nectar of love. What good will come from pouring scorn on the past ? Think of her dark future, take her by the hand and bring her.

Lest for lack of love this shamed soul fling away repentance, bring her, call and bring her. She has come to give herself up ; bind her fast with loving arms ; if she goes to-day, what if she never comes again ?

By one day's neglect, one day's contempt and anger, you will lose a life for ever. Do you not purpose to give life ? Neglect is a poisoned arrow ; with sorrowing pardon bring her, call and bring her.

*Tr. Miss Whitehouse.*

#### CIV. THE TREE OF LIFE

TORU DUTT

ENGLISH

Broad daylight, with a sense of weariness !  
 Mine eyes were closed, but I was not asleep,  
 My hand was in my father's, and I felt  
 His presence near me. Thus we often passed  
 In silence hour by hour. What was the need  
 Of interchanging words when every thought  
 That in our hearts arose, was known to each,  
 And every pulse kept time ? Suddenly there shone  
 A strange light, and the scene as sudden changed.  
 I was awake :—It was an open plain,  
 Illimitable,—stretching, stretching,—oh, so far !  
 And o'er it that strange light, a glorious light  
 Like that the stars shed over fields of snow  
 In a clear, cloudless, frosty winter night,  
 Only intense, in its brilliance calm.  
 And in the midst of that vast plain, I saw,  
 For I was wide awake,—it was no dream,  
 A tree with spreading branches and with leaves  
 Of divers kinds,—dead silver and live gold,  
 Shimmering in radiance that no words may tell !

Beside the tree an Angel stood ; 'he plucked  
 A few small sprays, and bound them round my head.  
 Oh, the delicious touch of those strange leaves !  
 No longer throbbed my brows, no more I felt  
 The fever in my limbs—" And oh," I cried,  
 " Bind, too, my father's forehead with these leaves."  
 One leaf the Angel took and therewith touched  
 His forehead, and then gently whispered, " Nay !"  
 Never, oh never had I seen a face  
 More beautiful than that Angel's, or more full  
 Of holy pity and of love divine.  
 Wondering I looked awhile,—then all at once  
 Opened my tear-dimmed eyes—when lo ! the light  
 Was gone—the light as of the stars when snow  
 Lies deep upon the ground. No more, no more,  
 Was seen the Angel's face. I only found  
 My father watching patient by my bed,  
 And holding in his own, close-prest, my hand.

## CV. STILL BARRED THY DOORS

ARU DUTT

ENGLISH

Still barred thy doors ! The far east glows,  
 The morning wind blows fresh and free.  
 Should not the hour that wakes the rose  
 Awaken also thee ?

All look for thee, Love, Light and Song,  
 Light in the sky deep red above,  
 Song in the lark of pinion strong,  
 And in my heart, true Love.

Apart we miss our nature's goal,  
 Why strive to cheat our destinies ?  
 Was not my love made for thy soul ?  
 Thy beauty for mine eyes ?

No longer sleep,  
 Oh, listen now !

I wait and weep,  
 But where art thou ?<sup>1</sup>

*From A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields.*

## CVI. LOVE'S CARELESSNESS

SAROJABĀLĀ (DĀS GUPTA) SEN

BENGALI

Lo, where the bird at rest  
 Twitters in careless ease upon her nest !  
 Throughout all storm wherewith the loud tree swings  
 Broods in the skyflier's breast the pride of wings.

Though soft leaves interlace,  
 Making a hiding-place,  
 The sheltered life within does not forget  
 How strong she is, how free, by Nature's right ;  
 Though nest and foliage fall, her refuge yet  
 Remains, the boundless heaven's unpillared height !

So with the bridegroom in my soul to-day,  
 Rejoicing, free, a lover's mask I play.  
 But well the Spirit of Love within me knows  
 She'll spread her wings, when all this sport shall close,  
 On the boundless void, soaring above all wrack,  
 Vanishing on the Eternal's trackless track.<sup>1</sup>

*Tr. Edward J. Thompson.*

## CVII. HUSBAND AND WIFE

LAKSHMĪ BĀI TILAK

MARĀṬHĪ

As a river loses itself when it blends with the  
 ocean, so the bride becomes one with the family of her  
 husband.

This is no mere marriage ; it is the blending by  
 love of their lives in one. And how can our words  
 describe such a union ?

Drenched by the billows of joy and sorrow in the  
 ocean of life, this bond of love emerges, rendered  
 indissoluble for evermore.

Ever on the hearts of husband and wife nectar is  
 sprinkled ; and by it the bond of joy and sorrow grows  
 firmer, more divine, more lovely.

<sup>1</sup> From *Basanta Prayāna*.

The relationship of husband and wife is full of love, yea, it is all pure love. The fragrant, cool wind of love fills their whole world.

Those are called husband and wife who have one soul, though their bodies and feelings be divided.

They are like two wheels in the cart of life; and vainly will one try to draw it without the help of the other.

Where this is not so, life is but wearisome. Apart from his wife, a husband is lame; and so is she apart from him.

When oil and wick combine, the flame leaps up; so, in the experience of the world, union alone is potent.

*Tr. B. K. Uzgare and Mrs. Uzgare.*

### CVIII. CRADLE SONG

SAROJINĪ NAIDU

ENGLISH

From groves of spice,  
O'er fields of rice,  
    Athwart the lotus-stream,  
I bring for you,  
Aglint with dew,  
    A little, lovely dream.

Sweet, shut your eyes,  
The wild fireflies  
    Dance through the fairy *neem* :  
From the poppy-bole  
For you I stole  
    A little lovely dream.

Dear eyes, good night,  
In golden light  
    The stars around you gleam ;  
On you I press  
With soft caress  
    A little lovely dream.

CIX. THE ENLIGHTENER<sup>1</sup>

SAROJABĀLĀ (DĀS GUPTA) SEN

BENGALI

Oh ! Who is this, enwrapped in brooding night,  
Lies lulled asleep, yet momentarily apart  
Rends the black vapours of His seat, men's heart,  
And thrills the dark with splendour, like the light  
Of holy dawn's far-rolling chariot bright ?

Who, risen out of sleep, with pitying gaze  
Looks on the senseless comrade at his side,  
A prisoner in death's meshes trapped and tied ?  
Then—He, the passionless—from that amaze  
Springs, with redeeming passion set ablaze !

He stoops, and with those burning lips, whose kiss  
Enlightenment and strength and hallowing gives,  
Startles the sleeping form ! The dead one lives !—  
In love incessant, active, Who is this  
That makes the awakened drink of life and bliss ?

Unwearied, but without desire !  
Insatiate, but without the gnawing fire  
Of hunger, Him the world's vain mask enthalls not ;  
The phantom noise of its illusion calls not.  
In Him no parts are found ;  
No body locks Him round.  
He by compulsion draws none ; nay, nor one  
That seeketh Him would shun.  
Opposing none, resisting none, He still  
Bears gifts for those who will ;  
In life on life the Eternal Witness stands,  
Enlightenment and freedom in his hands.

*Tr. Edward J. Thompson.*

<sup>1</sup> This extract is really two poems, occurring in different parts of *Basanta Prayāna*. The second part is the answer to the first.

## CX. BE NOT DISMAYED

ELLEN GOREH

ENGLISH

By love all others serving  
Though love's reward be pain ;  
From duty never swerving,  
When Love's commands are plain.

Look up in Love's Face only,—  
Let this thy comfort be,  
Love will not leave thee lonely,  
Love *greatly* loveth thee.

Thus upward, upward gazing  
Without a doubt or fear,  
Live in His love amazing  
To whom thou art so dear.

Love's yoke shall never grieve thee,  
Love's burden is so light.  
Love's word cannot deceive thee ;  
Love's hope will cheer thy sight.

Love's cross then bravely bearing,  
Love's crown upon thy head,  
Love's precious badge aye wearing,  
Love's banner o'er thee spread.

Go onward, onward singing,  
Upon thy joyful way ;  
Thy happy praises bringing  
To Love's high Throne each day.

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